

Connections



Resource Guide

Enhanced Community Service and Strategies for Keeping Kids in School

Instructions for Assembly of *Connections Resource Guide*:

The Resource Guide is designed to be printed on two-sided paper and put in a three-hole binder. It has page numbers on alternating sides of the page, so once it has been downloaded, it should be duplicated two-sided on a copier. There are several blank pages that are necessary for proper positioning of sections—be sure to leave them in place when duplicating.

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Enhanced Community Service and Strategies for Keeping Kids in School

Written by Dee Lindenberger/SAPE

This Resource Guide is part of a collaborative project between:

Michigan Department of Education

O'Neill Consulting

Michigan Strategic Alternatives in Prevention Education (SAPE) Association

Calhoun Intermediate School District

Macomb Intermediate School District

Eaton Intermediate School District

Marquette-Alger Regional Educational Service Agency

Kent Intermediate School District

Wayne Regional Educational Service Agency

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Connections Resource Guide

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Introduction

What Is SAPE?

SAPE, is an acronym for Strategic Alternatives in Prevention Education. Created by an act of the Michigan State Legislature in 1971 under the name “Substance Abuse Prevention Education,” SAPE provides outstanding leadership in Michigan and the U.S. by developing research-based programs related to substance abuse prevention, violence and bullying prevention, neuroscience-based learning, organizational change, student assistance/crisis response programs, and suspension and expulsion.

Numerous SAPE initiatives have been recognized as programs of excellence on the state and national levels, including formal recognition by the Michigan Association of School Boards, the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, the National Rural Institute on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the Centers for Disease Control. SAPE is Michigan’s most experienced network of professionals working together with youth, educators, parents, and community members to prevent high risk behaviors through positive youth development. SAPE consultants are located at the following sites in Michigan:

Calhoun Intermediate School District

Guy Golomb (269) 781-5141

Eaton Intermediate School District

Charlotte Koger (517) 543-5500 x. 1161

Sara Lurie (517) 543-5500 x. 1111

Martha Neilsen (517) 627-4703

Kent Intermediate School District

John Belaski (616) 365-2270

Macomb Intermediate School District

Lucy Smith (586) 228-3491

Marquette-Alger Regional Educational Service Agency

Dee Lindenberger (906) 226-5122

Wayne Regional Educational Service Agency

Kathy Gibson (734) 334-1608



SAPE's Mission

The mission of SAPE is to promote the development of healthy, resilient children, schools, and communities through asset-building and collaborative partnerships that form a *circle of support* for our youth.

Acknowledgments

This guidebook represents the cumulative wisdom and experience of the members of the Michigan SAPE Association. I would like to acknowledge my appreciation for their help in conceptualizing the ideas and strategies for this Resource Guide. While the development of this book was completed with the support of *all* the SAPE consultants, I would like to recognize the extraordinary amount of time and help provided by two people: Kathy Gibson and Étienne Senker.

Kathy Gibson is an outstanding editor! She spent an enormous amount of time (often at home at night!) reading and rereading drafts—and provided *many* suggestions that helped to make this a better document. (I don't call her “Eagle Eye” for no reason!)

Étienne Senker (“Senker”) is also an editor and proof reader extraordinaire! He's the one who found the missing commas, extra spaces, inconsistencies in style, and “orphaned words” that sometimes get left behind after sentences get moved around. (His nickname is “Hawk Eye.”) He also formatted the citations and reference pages—a time-consuming, exacting, and thankless job!

In addition, I'd like to thank **Merrilee Keller** and Pathways Substance Abuse Services for supporting a portion of my time with this project. Merrilee is one of Michigan's “fiercest advocates” for youth and is always willing to do whatever it takes to provide the best services and education for young people.

A huge thank you goes to **Jim O'Neill**, our project evaluator, for his collaboration on the *Connections Effective Schools Survey*. Jim has been formally adopted as a “SAPE Deputy”! None of us in SAPE could imagine a more competent or enjoyable project evaluator to have on our team.

Other people who helped with editing and proofing were **Martie Manty**, a talented Prevention Consultant whom Michigan recently lost to Vermont; and **Larry Boburka**, a gifted counselor at Westwood High School.

Last, but definitely not least, “thank you” to my daughter **Heather**, my “adopted son” **Will Manty**, and *Senker* for supporting things on the home front during long hours in the office.

Overview to Connections



Resource Guide

Enhanced Community Service and Strategies for Keeping Kids in School

Key Question: What's the purpose of this Resource Guide?

Having hope is an essential part of one's social, emotional, and spiritual sustenance. It gives us strength to live and continually move forward, even when conditions seem hopeless.

Blanstein and Guetzloe, 2000

The *Connections Resource Guide: Enhanced Community Service and Strategies for Keeping Kids in School* is a “work in progress” that is funded by the Michigan Department of Education in accordance with Title IV No Child Left Behind. Its purpose is to support the efforts of school/community teams that are recipients of Community Service Grants, as well as anyone else looking for ways to keep kids connected to school. But, that's not its *real* purpose.

Its real purpose is to provide *hope*—hope for the students who are at risk of, or have been, suspended or expelled from school, *and* hope for the educators and community members who work with them. Students who are confronted with repeated suspensions or expulsion are often in such deep trouble in one or more areas of their lives that they are “disconnected” from school, from the people in their school, and from learning. They often have little hope that things will get better. When hope is lost, so too is a student's motivation and will to “continually move forward”—to make the behavioral, social, or academic changes that are needed in order for them to be successful in school and in life. Suspended and expelled students need to believe that things can be better. They need to believe there's *a way back* for them—a way to connect with school, the people in their school, and with learning.

Suspended and expelled students need to believe that things can be better. They need to believe there's a way back for them—a way to connect with school, the people in their school, and with learning.

Suspension and expulsion should be the last resorts educators use as strategies to motivate students to change their behavior. As educators, our hope for change tends to wane with each suspension a student serves, and is gone by the time a student is expelled. Expulsion represents the end of the line for a student's relationship with us and symbolizes to them the end of our belief that they can change.


At a point in time when students have little or no hope for their future as successful learners in school, we can share *our* belief that they are capable of making the necessary changes in their lives. Numerous longitudinal studies in resiliency have demonstrated the enormous impact that a caring relationship with an adult can have on a child—a relationship that instills a “sense of the possible” and the belief that the child can overcome obstacles. However, we can't give what we don't have, and so it is imperative, if we are to make a difference in the lives of

suspended and expelled students, that 1) we nurture within ourselves a steadfast sense of “the possible” for even our most challenging students, and 2) we have access to a broad repertoire of effective strategies that reach and teach students with problem behaviors, rather than just punish them.

Thus, the real purpose of this Resource Guide is to provide educators and community members with the *tools of hope*: a framework of understanding issues related to suspensions and expulsions, and a repertoire of research-based strategies and resources that will enable them to work effectively with at-risk students—while inspiring in them a “sense of the possible.” Otherwise, why bother?

Following is an overview of the Resource Guide. It includes a “key question” that each section is designed to answer and a brief description of the content of the section:


I. CHARACTERISTICS AND FACTORS RELATED TO SUSPENDED AND EXPELLED STUDENTS

 **Key Question:** *What characteristics and factors determine a student’s level of risk for suspension and expulsion?*

There’s a dynamic range of *risk and protective factors* at play that will make students more or less vulnerable to engaging in problem behaviors that are related to suspension and expulsion. When we have an understanding of the ways in which characteristics of the individual, family, school, and community interact and influence each other, we will have a wider lens through which to view students’ problem behaviors. When we see a larger picture, we can better understand the function and intent of maladaptive behaviors. This allows us to make more informed choices about how to help students make changes that will help them meet their needs in a more pro-social way and become successful learners. Consequently, this section is devoted to building a framework of understanding regarding the characteristics and risk/protective factors in the following domains that play determining roles in student suspension and expulsion:


- A. Family Domain
- B. Individual Domain
- C. School Domain
- D. Community Domain

II. SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION: THE INTENT AND THE REALITY

 **Key Question:** *What is the intent of suspension and expulsion, and what is the reality of their impact on students?*

This section focuses on the research regarding the overall effectiveness and impact of suspension and expulsion as a means of improving students’ behavior and creating safer learning environments.

III. FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE: STRATEGIES FOR MAKING CONNECTIONS

 **Key Question:** *How can we help suspended and expelled students connect to their schools, the people in their schools, to learning, to their communities, and to themselves?*

A. Structured Community Domain Strategies

B. Effective School Domain Strategies

Structured Community Domain Strategies

Community service is a means of providing ongoing structure and learning for students who are suspended or expelled. This section will present strategies that can help ensure successful implementation of community service projects for suspended and expelled students. There are a variety of transition services and resources that can help maximize the effectiveness of a student's community service experience, including procedures for the following: 1) selection of a compatible placement, 2) support for academics and their community service work (including use of mentors) while serving their suspension or expulsion, 3) facilitation of a reflection process that helps students learn from their experience and plan for needed behavioral and academic changes, and 4) connections to needed support services upon re-entry into school.


Effective School Domain Strategies

The learning and successful connections made through students' participation in a positive community service experience during suspension or expulsion can be enhanced when they return to a supportive and engaging school environment. The intent of the school-based strategies is to increase the chances of a successful reintegration into school following suspension or expulsion. A range of research-based strategies are presented that will help students make changes that will enable them to be successful learners, and inspire hope for both adults and students.

The findings suggest that families, schools, churches, businesses, government, media, and other segments within the community must work together to address common concerns, share resources, and create a better world for our young people.

Benson, 1997

IV. PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION: THE CHANGE PROCESS

 **Key Question:** *How do we motivate and maintain a systems change that will prevent suspensions and expulsions and promote student success for all?*

Good intentions and a collection of specific strategies aren't enough. When looking for an effective strategy to prevent problem behaviors that lead to suspensions and expulsions, a growing body of research supports an approach that is systemic. Based upon the work of pioneers in the field of organizational change such as Peter Senge and Michael Fullan, this section will offer some strategies for initiating and maintaining an effective change process.

V. RESOURCES



Key Question: *What resources are available?*


This section provides a variety of resources to assist you in your continued learning, planning, and implementation of strategies.

- A. Annotated Bibliography of Research Articles and Books
- B. Community Service Grant Contact Information:
 - 1) SAPE Technical Support Consultants
 - 2) Michigan Department of Education Project Director
 - 3) Project Evaluator
- C. Assessment and Planning Tools

VI. CITATIONS

Sources are provided for citations in the text.

I. CHARACTERISTICS AND FACTORS RELATED TO SUSPENDED AND EXPELLED STUDENTS

 **Key Question:** *What characteristics and factors determine a student's level of risk for suspension and expulsion?*

Who are the students involved in [suspension] and expulsion? Through the examination of the characteristics of these students, [and the environments in which they live], we may come to understand the reasons for their misbehavior and the paths that bring them, over time, to commit serious school rule violations.

*G. Morrison, Anthony, Storino,
Cheng, Furlong, and R. Morrison, 2001*

Introduction to Risk and Protective Factors

“Risk factors” are characteristics or conditions that have been scientifically linked to an increase in a student’s level of risk for problem behaviors (e.g., chemical use, aggression/violence, vandalism, truancy, academic failure). Those that decrease a student’s vulnerability are “protective factors.” Literally hundreds of cross cultural, longitudinal studies spanning as long as fifty years have demonstrated the powerful effect these factors can have in buffering the negative impact of adversity (Werner, 1989; Rutter, 1985). The research of Emmy Werner remains the seminal work regarding the capacity for people to “spring back” from severe stress and trauma as a result of protective factors. This capacity to “successfully adapt in the face of adversity” and go on to “develop social, academic, and vocational competence...” is known as resiliency (Henderson, 1996).

It is important to remember in our dealing with students that they possess both risk and protective factors, and because of that, there is no *one* factor that can predict problem behaviors that are related to suspension and expulsion. Rather, there are a number of relevant characteristics in the *individual* and *environmental* domains of a student’s life that are continually interacting. Ultimately, it is the *balance* of risk and protective factors that determines a student’s level of risk at any point in time.

Family background, personal characteristics of the child, the school context and the social behavior of children interact to create conditions that place children at risk of failing to achieve their academic potential, dropping out of school, and/or having limits placed on their ability to function as productive adults in society.

Boyd, 1992

The number and intensity of risk and protective factors in a student’s life can shift with changing circumstances—a divorce in the family, death of a friend, rejection or harassment by peers. Simply making the transition from middle

*No one is invulnerable;
every person has a
“threshold” beyond which
he or she can “succumb.”*

*Benard, 1992
citing Rutter, 1979*

to high school tends to be a time of increased risk for students, a reality that is reflected by the fact that 14 is the most common age for expulsions in Michigan schools (Student Advocacy Center of Michigan, 2002). “No one is invulnerable; every person has a ‘threshold’ beyond which he or she can ‘succumb’” (Benard, 1992 citing Rutter, 1979).

A note of caution regarding *risk factors*: We need to be able to identify students who are at increased risk and provide them with support. However, there is an inherent danger of an identified risk factor becoming a “label.” When a student has a label, it tends to negatively skew how we view them and limits our ability to see their strengths and potential. Labeling a student is, in effect, an additional risk factor. So, while we will discuss risk factors that are related to suspension and expulsion, bear in mind that the purpose is to provide a *context for understanding* problem behaviors and to help *identify appropriate support services*. Our task is to *counterbalance* identified risk factors, “either by decreasing the exposure to risk factors and stressful life events, or by increasing the number of available protective factors...in the lives of vulnerable children” (Werner, 1990).

Just as there is no one characteristic that can predict problem behaviors, there is no single profile of risk factors for students who are suspended or expelled. This is due, in part, to the fact that there is a wide range of infractions that can result in suspension or expulsion (e.g., truancy; disobedience; reckless driving on campus; profanity; alcohol, tobacco, or other drug use; fighting or assaults; verbal threats; weapons). There are, however, some reoccurring environmental and individual characteristics among students engaged in problem behaviors. The characteristics and factors of the various domains (Family, Individual, School, and Community) described below are particularly relevant to students who have *multiple infractions* as opposed to those who have a one-time offense that is atypical of their normal behavior.

Antisocial behavior is the “recurrent violations of socially prescribed patterns of behavior”

*Simcha-Fagen, et al.
1975*

Antisocial behavior is one of the reoccurring characteristics that is related to suspension and expulsion. It is defined as “recurrent violations of socially prescribed patterns of behavior” (Simcha-Fagen, et al. 1975). Antisocial behaviors include a broad spectrum of behaviors, ranging from physical violence and entrenched patterns of opposition to minor forms of disrespect and disobedience.

[Antisocial behavior] is characterized by forms of hostility, including “aggression, a willingness to commit rule infractions, defiance of adult authority, and violation of the social norms of society....In a very real sense, antisocial behavior is about aggression. Aggressive behavior can be expressed in physical, gestural, and verbal forms...” (Walker, 1995). [It is also characterized by] being unruly, stealing, or lying...

Mcevoy & Welker, 2000

Based upon a review of state and national literature, that definition of antisocial behavior is relevant to the majority of behaviors that result in suspension or expulsion, particularly of those students who have multiple infractions (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003; Skiba & Reece, 1999).

Characteristics and Risk/Protective Factors in Domains

There are four “domains” in a student’s life that play a role in determining a student’s risk for behaviors related to suspension and expulsion:

- A. Family Domain
- B. Individual Domain
- C. School Domain
- D. Community Domain

Characteristics and risk/protective factors in each of those domains will be presented, along with a “causal model” that illustrates how the interplay of cumulative risk factors across domains is part of a predictable path of escalating antisocial behaviors. In addition to the protective factors and suggestions provided within each of the domain sections, a comprehensive list of strategies that serve as countervailing forces” will be provided in Section III (*From Research to Practice: Strategies for Making Connections*).

A. Family Domain: Characteristics and Factors

Thus the path to delinquency, criminality, and ultimately prison begins for many individuals very early in their lives. It starts with the early acquisition of an antisocial behavior pattern within the home and family that is often well developed prior to entering school....This is a highly predictable path...

Walker, Colvin, and Ramsey, 1995

Repeated office referrals are associated...with higher levels of family conflict.

Morrison, et al. 2001

Families, Stress, and Antisocial Behavior

While antisocial behavior can be the result of physical or neurological injury, such as brain trauma, there is a substantial amount of research showing a consistent association with family dysfunction and pathology (Rutter, Giller, and Hagell, 1998; Walker, et al. 1995; Patterson, Reid, and Dishion, 1992; Olweus, 1993). Families can be “aggression-generating systems” that in effect *teach* and promote antisocial behavior among their members (Olweus, 1993). It is important to understand the characteristics of these families for two reasons:

- 1) it will prepare us to work more effectively with both the students and parents in those families, and
- 2) the same characteristics that exemplify “aggression-generating” family systems apply to schools. Schools can be aggression-generating systems as well.

Antisocial behavior is the “single best predictor of delinquency in adolescence” (Walker, 1995)—and along with delinquent behavior comes suspension and expulsion. This is supported by the fact that the majority of *expulsions* in Michigan are the result of aggressive behavior: 38% for physical assaults/fighting, 16% for infractions involving weapons, 15% for verbal assaults, 4% for bomb threats, and 1% each for vandalism, arson, and theft (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003).

Walker and his colleagues conducted a longitudinal study that followed two cohorts of fourth-grade boys. One group scored high on scales of aggression and antisocial behavior; the other group scored low and was considered to be “at minimal risk” for such behaviors. Students having high scores on scales of aggression and antisocial behavior at fourth grade had a dropout rate of 62% compared to 12% in the control group (1995). Established patterns of antisocial behavior can even be accurately identified by 3 or 4 years of age.

What do we know about family systems that predictably produce children who can be identified as “antisocial” by such an early age? There are a number of factors that can create a chronic state of stress and dysfunction in families.

Following are five major stressors that can trigger dysfunction:

1) Criminal Activity of Parents

Children whose parents have criminal records have a greater chance of delinquency and criminal activity themselves. A longitudinal study of 350 children found that 37% of boys having fathers with a criminal record became delinquent by the age of 18 compared to 8% of boys whose fathers had no criminal record (Walker, et al. 1995).

2) Substance Abusing Parents

Parents with drug and alcohol problems pass on a harsh legacy for their children. The abuse (physical, sexual, or emotional), neglect, and general family dysfunction that are related to parental substance abuse have long been documented in the literature. They are reflected in a wide range of children's problem behaviors, including higher rates of juvenile delinquency, mental illness, suicide, and teenage marriages (Wegscheider, 1989). Each of these behaviors increases the likelihood of school failure by dropping out, suspension, or expulsion.

The evidence demonstrating that a school can serve as a "protective shield to help children withstand the multiple vicissitudes that they can expect of a stressful world" abounds, whether it is coming from a family environment devastated by alcoholism or mental illness or from a poverty-stricken community environment, or both (Garmezy, 1991).

Benard, 1992

3) Teenage Parents

Children of teenage parents are at elevated risk for antisocial behavior and related school problems as they grow up, as a result of stressors their young parents are likely to encounter (e.g., curtailed education, poverty, being on welfare, lack of support from a partner, and lack of adequate coping and parenting skills). The child's risk is particularly high if the teen mother was under the age of eighteen at the time of their birth. Another consideration regarding teenage parents is the potential for the single mother (or father) to be involved in relationships with a number of different partners. The disruptions and inconsistency that are part of repeated separations or changes in caregivers are substantial risk factors for antisocial behavior. The Dunedin study identified it as the "strongest of all family predictors" (Henry, et al. 1993). The same cycle of repeated separations and changes in caregivers can occur with divorce and broken homes, and will have a similar impact on the children.

4) Poverty

Delinquency is associated with social disadvantage and poverty (Bolger, et al. 1995). A study by Nichols (1999) indicates this is particularly true of African Americans: "...individual poverty impacts African Americans but not European Americans." A longitudinal study of 378 families looked at the effects of economic stress on family members. The findings indicate that the effect on antisocial behavior is *indirectly* related to poverty. In other words, it's not "poverty" per se that is related to antisocial behavior; it is the risk factors that can result from poverty, such as "parental depression, marital conflict, and parental

Students carry the stress that they may be feeling at home to the school context, where their distress is reflected through misbehavior.

Morrison, et al. 2001

hostility” (Rutter and Giller, 1983). Michigan students who have been expelled are almost 2.5 times as likely as the general student population to be living at less than 100% of the federal poverty level (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003).

It is interesting to note that while socioeconomic differences *are* a risk factor for inadequate parenting and antisocial behavior in the United States and England, they are *not* a risk factor in Norway and Sweden. Dan Olweus attributes that to the fact that there are greater inequalities in socioeconomic conditions among families in the United States and England (1993).

5) Homelessness

Students who are homeless confront a myriad of problems that elevate their risk for problem behaviors. Whether students are homeless because their families are without housing, or they are homeless because they have left their families, the result is the same: the very core of their sense of security is unstable and life is unpredictable. The unstable conditions in which they live affect their ability to consistently meet even the most basic human needs for safety, shelter, and food. Students whose families are homeless are often fatigued from caring for younger siblings and are unprepared for school because they don’t have a quiet place to do their homework. Transportation problems contribute to attendance problems in school. In addition, students may be also dealing with chronic stressors related to family dysfunction, such as alcoholism/drug addiction, abuse, or poverty (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 1994).

All of the above stressors are directly or indirectly related to antisocial behavior. Given the right circumstances, other sources of family stress could also promote the development of antisocial behavior patterns (e.g., divorce, unemployment, death, mental illness). Simply being a child in a family “having over four children” is correlated with antisocial behavior if the parents don’t have adequate resources (Rutter, et al. 1983). *All families experience stressors over the course of time. There are two critical questions that will determine the impact on family members:*

- 1) *How long* has the family been in a stressed state?
- 2) *How capable* is the family of coping with the stress?

The risk level for family dysfunction and children’s problem behaviors increases if the stress becomes *chronic* (particularly if there’s a *cumulative effect* with multiple stressors over time). The risk increases further if the parents’ *skill level to cope is inadequate*.

While the specific stressors in families may vary, researchers have identified the following shared characteristics that promote antisocial behavior (Olweus, 1993; Rutter, et al. 1983; Patterson, et al. 1992; Walker, et al. 1995).

Family Risk Factors

1. Poor Emotional Connection and Bonding

Relationships are characterized by *low levels of emotional attachment* and bonding. There is a *lack of warmth and positive attention*. Parents *aren't involved* in their children's day-to-day lives and *don't participate in positive activities* together. The relationships are *unstable* and characterized by *conflict and coercion*. Aggression is an accepted norm.

2. Lack of Clear Limits and Consequences

There is a *lack of clear and fair rules* that are *consistently upheld*. Limits and consequences are *unpredictable* and *inconsistent*—and *unrelated to the logic* of the child's actual behavior. Rather, the parents' response is based upon their mood and disposition at the time of the infraction. A rule that is enforced with physical punishment on one day, might go completely unnoticed another day. Because the parents are not involved in their children's daily activities, they *don't do a good job of monitoring or supervising* their behavior. The resulting lack of consistency is exacerbated by the unpredictability of a generally *overly permissive* discipline style that is periodically interrupted by *overly punitive* consequences. Thus, the children grow up not knowing exactly where “the line” of acceptable behavior is or what will happen if they “cross the line.”

3. Harsh Disciplinary Practices

Parents of antisocial children tend to use disciplinary practices that are characterized by *hostility* and *explosive outbursts of emotion*. Consequences are designed to punish and control, rather than to teach. Consequences are overly punitive and out of proportion to the seriousness of the violation. They tend to be enforced with expression of anger or frustration. “A...factor that has been found to raise the child's level of aggression is the parents' use of ‘*power-assertive*’ *child-rearing methods* such as physical punishment and violent emotional outbursts. This finding supports the notion that ‘violence begets violence.’” (Olweus, 1993)

Families having the above characteristics are “aggression-generating” systems and they are likely to produce children who exhibit the following traits and behaviors: hostility, bullying/harassment, intimidation, defiance of adult authority, rule infractions, and disrespect for the mores of school and the community. These antisocial patterns are learned by a very early age, and they leave children ill-prepared to be successful when they come to school.

Children learn what's modeled for them. A child who consistently receives negative responses to social and emotional encounters with their primary caregiver(s) learns that people cannot be relied upon, and he/she ultimately disconnects. In an abusive environment, they learn that the way to get their needs met is to be aggressive and/or violent.

Jensen, 2000

To the degree to which parents are viewed through eyes of judgment or blame, our effectiveness to help and support them, and their children, will diminish.

It is important to remember that a student's risk level for problem behavior could suddenly spike as a result of an unexpected crisis in their life: a divorce, death, loss of family income, teenage pregnancy—any of these things will create stress that could be reflected in a student's behavior in school.

Note: The term “dysfunctional” family system is used in this document with reservation because it is both inaccurate and often carries judgmental implications of parental failure and blame. Families that are described as “dysfunctional” are *not* actually dysfunctional. They do, in fact, *function*—they simply function in a highly stressed, survival mode. And, the parents have neither failed nor do they deserve blame—they are simply doing the best they can given the knowledge and skills they have. To the degree to which parents are viewed through eyes of judgment or blame, our effectiveness to help and support them, and their children, will diminish.

Perhaps a more useful way to view parents and families is through the lens of “gifts and missing pieces,” a term coined by Charles King, a school counselor from Minnesota. All individuals and all families have gifts and missing pieces. *Gifts* represent knowledge and skills we have gained that help us live as competent and well-socialized individuals in our society. Having the “skill to resolve conflicts” is an example of a gift. *Missing pieces* are the things we haven't yet learned. The “lack of skills to manage anger” is an example of a missing piece. Some families have more missing pieces than gifts. The fact that parents don't teach their children about anger management is not about a lack of caring or wanting the best for their children. It's about not being able to give what they don't have.

When we look at people and families in terms of gifts and missing pieces, we help free them from the limitations of a self-fulfilling perspective that can keep them, and us, stuck. We will become more adept at seeing, and being able to build upon, their innate strengths and resilience.

B. Individual Domain: Characteristics and Factors

Research findings have made it abundantly clear that there are individual characteristics that influence liability to antisocial behavior.

Rutter, et al. 1998

The following risk and protective factors are within the Individual Domain. They are related to a student's biology, mental health, skills, and behaviors.

1. Biological Predisposition

Students can come into the world with a cognitive or neurological deficit that predisposes them to problem behaviors by virtue of a variety of disabilities: developmental disorders such as autism and Asperger's syndrome, learning disabilities (LD), ADHD, Fetal Alcohol (FAS/FAE), brain trauma, and chemical dysregulation (Jensen, 2000). There is also a relationship between antisocial behavior and the following characteristics that has been well-researched and indicates the likelihood of "biological substrates": cognitive impairment (e.g., verbal and planning skills), temperamental features (e.g., impulsivity, sensation-seeking, aggressiveness, "hot-headedness"), and impaired processing of social information (e.g., misreading social cues and perceiving negative intentions in other's behavior) (Rutter, et al. 1998).

In spite of the fact that very few special needs students represent a serious danger to students or staff (Morrison and D'Incau, 2000), they are disproportionately expelled in Michigan.

Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003

It's important to note that none of these factors alone predestine a student to behaviors that lead to suspension or expulsion. "Genetic factors are influential... They do not cause antisocial behavior directly; rather, they constitute one set of influences operating in probabilistic fashion as part of multifactorial causation" (Rutter, et al. 1998). Much depends upon the complex interactions of these factors with the characteristics of the home and school environments, as well as availability of effective community support services.

In spite of the fact that very few special needs students represent a serious danger to students or staff (Morrison and D'Incau, 2000), they are disproportionately expelled in Michigan (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003). According to the Student Advocacy Center of Michigan (2002), 71% of the students referred to the agency for expulsions were "special needs" students, with 19.6% being special education certified or receiving legal protections. A biological predisposition makes students more vulnerable to risk factors in their environments. This reinforces the need to provide school environments that are rich in protective factors that will help counter-balance their biological risk factors.

2. Lack of Connectedness and Bonding to School

Walker, et al. (1983) conceptualize "bonds" as being comprised of three elements: 1) *attachment*: having a positive emotional connection toward people; 2) *commitment*: having an investment in the "social unit"; and 3) *belief*: meaning sharing in the values of that social unit. In this case, the "social

unit” would be the school. Students who are suspended or expelled tend to be *disconnected*:

Just as in the family arena, the level of caring and support within the school is a powerful predictor of positive outcomes for youth.

Benard, 1992

- 1) They are *disconnected from people* in school. They tend to lack positive emotional attachments to teachers and administrators as a result of years of conflictive disciplinary relationships. Frequently, they have also experienced rejection by the mainstream of students.
- 2) They are *disconnected from a commitment to school* as a social unit. Their level of involvement in activities where they can contribute or have a “voice” —or in any sort of extra curricular activities, is very low (Morrison and D’Incau, 1997).
- 3) They are *disconnected from the primary value of school: learning*. As noted above, one of the most common characteristics of suspended and expelled students is academic failure. “Students who fall significantly behind in school may have difficulty staying connected to school both academically and socially” (Wehlag, et al. 1989). Students who experience academic failure are not likely to value learning. Having parents who don’t place a high value on education, which is often the case for students with a history of school failure, further disconnects students from learning and the school as a whole.

A student’s “disconnection” can manifest itself directly, in the form of aggressive or defiant antisocial behavior. Or, it can be manifested indirectly, through behaviors such as lack of attention or participation in classes, tardiness, or truancy. Either way, it is a factor on a causal pathway that frequently leads to suspension or expulsion.

3. Problems with Authority and Limits

Kids with serious behavioral problems...have trouble accepting authority, [and] following the general kinds of rules you need in any community....They’re resistant to conforming.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001

One of the strongest motivations for breaking rules is to fight against a system that diminishes self-worth and importance.

Curwin, 1992

Although, problems dealing with authority and behavioral limits could be related to a situation-specific stressor (e.g., divorce, death, peer problems), when it is an established *behavioral pattern*, it is likely rooted in having grown up in an aggression-generating family system, as described above. Anti-authority problems are characterized by a disrespect and stubborn defiance of authority and rules—often the direct result of family dysfunction. In its less serious forms, this pattern of behavior may be simply a “learned” behavior that is the result of *modeling* in the dysfunctional family system. It could also have a biological component with links to ADD and mood disorders, and dysfunctional serotonin systems (Jensen, 2000). In more serious cases, it can be related to Oppositional Disorder—a condition that has been steadily increasing in school age populations. (Approximately 40 to 50 percent of ADD sufferers

also develop Oppositional Disorder.) Still more severe anti-authority problems could indicate Conduct Disorder, an extremely serious condition that requires referral to professional help. If not identified early and addressed, Oppositional Disorder can develop into Conduct Disorder, a diagnosis that is strongly correlated with future criminal involvement (Jensen, *Fragile Brain Training*, 2000). According to Jensen, students exhibiting these types of disruptive conditions, when compared to others, “have the worst academic performance records, the poorest relationships, and the weakest self-management skills (taking responsibility, planning, controlling anger, and being punctual).” This indicates the need for an effective process within schools for early identification and referral to appropriate support services.

4. Mental Health Issues

There are a number of mental health problems associated with suspension and expulsion. Based on statistics from the Student Advocacy Center of Michigan, 51.6% of expelled students “exhibited identifiable risk factors prior to expulsion. These risk factors included emotional problems such as depression, suicidal ideation, anger, impulsivity...previous trauma, and victimization by other students. Although these students had exhibited risk factors prior to expulsion, school systems had failed to provide consistent referrals for evaluation or appropriate follow-up services for these students” (2002). It is alarming that Michigan students who have *identifiable* mental health-related risk factors *prior to* their removal from school are expelled at a “significantly higher” rate than national norms.

5. Perceived Lack of Safety in School

Students need to have confidence that a standard of safety will be upheld in school for all students. Although the lack of a perception of safety in school affects *all* students, it represents more of a risk factor for two groups of students, and it will affect each of the groups differently. The degree to which an individual in either of these groups perceives a lack of safety, the risk to engage in antisocial behavior will increase.

- 1) *Students who bully and harass:* These students are opportunists. They engage in intimidating behaviors that threaten the emotional or physical safety of other students when they believe they can “get away with it.” When they perceive lax enforcement of limits and consequences to deter antisocial behavior in school, they are more likely to interpret that as a license to proceed. They rely on a lack of the school’s ability or willingness to ensure the safety of their targets.
- 2) *Targets of bullying and harassment:* These students live in *fear*—fear of being ridiculed, coerced, humiliated in front of friends, or physically hurt. (It’s interesting to note that “humiliation” was identified as a “child’s worst fear” in a study conducted by Kaoru Yamamoto, at the University of Colorado—they are afraid of “being laughed at” or

*What is the school...norm?
Is it about homophobia,
or fear or hatred of
anyone who is different
(xenophobia)? Is it about
the school making it okay
to belittle others—a hands-
off, “there’s nothing we can
do about it” approach to
children’s interactions...?*

*Garbarino and
deLara, 2002*

“losing face.”) “Fear of other students is the reason reported by one of every 12 students for dropping out of school” (Greenbaum and Turner, 1989). At one end of the spectrum, a target’s feelings of lack of safety might be related to truancy and poor grades. On the other end of the spectrum, those feelings may result in aggression, as targeted students attempt to defend themselves or seek revenge. Recent school shootings are an extreme example of this type of behavior.

We do not need more restrictive laws. Eric and Dylan would not have been stopped by metal detectors.

Darrell Scott, father of Columbine shooting victim, Rachel Scott

6. Involvement in High Risk Behaviors

Of all the high risk behaviors a student could be involved with, chemical use is one of the most common that can lead to suspension or expulsion. Removal from school could happen either as a *direct* result of their use, possession, or distribution, or as an *indirect* result of their involvement, (e.g., aggression, truancy, academic failure). The earlier the age of onset of use, the higher the risk for problem behaviors (Development Services Group, 2002). Other high risk behaviors that can directly or indirectly result in removal from school include gambling, teen sex, working more than 10 hours per week (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 1994), and associating with negative peer groups.

The lack of effective social and coping skills is particularly evident among the large percentage of suspended and expelled students who have special needs.

7. Inadequate Social and Coping Skills

Antisocial youth often do not display age-appropriate social behavior; they tend to be extremely immature in almost all of their social interactions with peers and adults in school. [They] consistently fail in their social relations with other children, youth, and adults (Parker & Asher, 1987).

Walker, et al. 1995

According to the findings from the National Survey of American Families, students expelled from Michigan schools were 12 times more likely to “frequently” have trouble getting along with others (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003). The lack of effective social and coping skills is particularly evident among the large percentage of suspended and expelled students who have special needs. Many neurological disabilities and mental health problems are characterized by social deficits. For example, in spite of a pro-social intent among students with ADHD and LD, they “experience significant peer problems and social failure” (Marray as cited in Keilitz and Dunivant, 1986).

Students who bully and harass rely on the use of aggression, threats, intimidation, manipulation, and coercion in relationships with their peers and adults alike. They are further handicapped socially due to their tendency to misinterpret

others' behaviors and misattribute hostile intent—a bias that *could* be based in a personal reality if they, themselves, have been a target of aggression and hostility (Rutter, et al. 1998). It is critical not to reinforce that perception with punitive consequences or aggressive interactions when disciplining students.

8. Lack of Participation in Constructive Activities

The reverse process of participation is alienation, the lack of bonding to social institutions like the family, the school, and the community, a process that has consistently been identified...as a major risk factor for involvement in alcohol and other drugs, delinquency, teen pregnancy, school failure, and depression and suicide.

Benard, 1992

Students who are alienated and involved with problem behavior tend to feel like they “don’t belong” in school and are unlikely to be involved in extracurricular activities. They frequently don’t participate in community-based activities either. The research conducted by Search Institute highlights the importance of youth engaging in structured and meaningful activities because they bring them into contact with “principled and caring adults who nurture skill and capacity through group activities, lessons, relationships, and supervision” (Benson, 1992). Benson also notes that these activities are even more important for those students with “absent, neglectful, overwhelmed, or underskilled families.” For those students, the opportunities for participation in constructive activities and connections with positive role models can make the critical difference in the course of their lives.

...schools with low levels of problems like delinquency...created a variety of opportunities to ensure that all kids found something they were interested in and could succeed in. “If you bring children in for a variety of things and give them multiple opportunities for success...it’s less likely that you get [an] anti-academic atmosphere” and alienation...

Benard, 1992 citing Rutter, 1984

9. Low Academic Achievement

One of the strongest, single risk factors for suspension and expulsion is low academic achievement. Across studies and irrespective of the precipitating event, the one common red flag is that students who have been removed from school tend to have performed well below average both in terms of grade level and achievement scores. The grade point average for English and Math courses is a key indicator, with the bulk of students recommended for suspension and expulsion having a D+ average (Morrison, et al. 2001). Academic failure is a correlate of “low commitment to school,” a well-researched risk factor for a number of high risk behaviors in the work of Hawkins and Catalano (1992).

10. Poor Attendance/Truancy

According to the National Survey of American Families (1997/1999), students expelled from Michigan schools were 4 times as likely to have a history of skipping school as other students. Numerous studies indicate that truancy is one of the most significant factors related to delinquency (Rutter, et al. 1998).

11. Disciplinary History of Suspension and Expulsion

Students who are not educated in the classroom are educated on the streets. There is a direct correlation between suspensions/expulsions and delinquency rates.

McDonald Brown and Birrane, 1994

Removal from school through suspension or expulsion has been found to be a risk factor in and of itself, increasing the likelihood of continued and escalating antisocial behaviors that will ultimately result in involvement with the juvenile court system. “It has been shown that one adjudicated event (i.e., school removal), leads to additional adjudicated events (juvenile justice records)” (Clark et al. 2003).

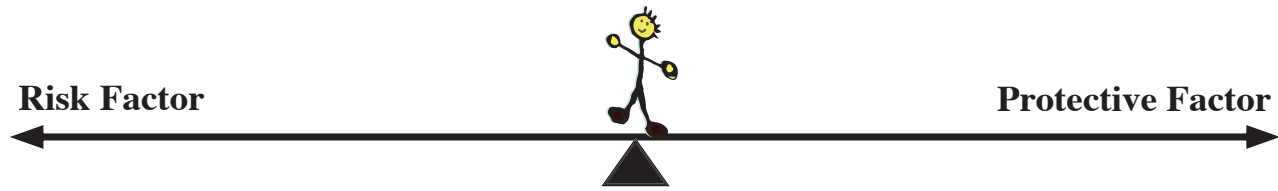
A behavioral trajectory characterized by student involvement in multiple offenses that lead to suspensions is associated with a “hardening” of social sensitivity on the part of the students.

Morrison, et al. 2001

Students who have been suspended are three times more likely to drop out of school (Skiba, et al. 1999). Suspension and expulsion also increase the risk of teenage pregnancy and parenting, with a 95% increased risk of pregnancy for girls, and 178% increased risk of parenting for boys (Clark, et al. 2003).

Note: The assumption is made that no student is suspended or expelled without a legitimate rule infraction, and therefore has responsibility for their misbehavior. However, in cases where schools overly rely upon their use as a disciplinary consequence, “suspension and expulsion” is a “school” risk factor as much as it is an “individual” risk factor.

Figure 1: Individual Domain Risk and Protective Factors



Biologology

Do they have any cognitive or neurological impairments or predispositions?

Connectedness and Bonding to School

Do they feel connected and like they “belong” in school?

Ability to Cope with Authority and Limits

How well to they deal with authority figures and abide with school rules and regulations?

Perception of Safety in School

Are they involved in bullying/harassment behaviors, either as “bullies” or as “targets”?

Status of Mental Health

Do they have any emotional problems (e.g., depression, trauma, suicide ideation, stress disorder)?

Level of Involvement in High-Risk Behaviors

*Are they involved with the use of alcohol/other drugs, or other high risk behaviors
(e.g., gambling, teen sex/parenting, homeless)*

Competency with Social and Coping Skills

What is their level of competency with social/coping skills (e.g., ability to deal with stress, anger, loss)?

Level of Participation in Constructive and Meaningful Activities

What is their level of participation in constructive and meaningful activities in school and community?

Academic Achievement

How successful are they academically?

Attendance in School

Do their records indicate truancy or good attendance in school?

Disciplinary History

Do they have a history of disciplinary interventions, including suspension or expulsion?

C. School Domain: Characteristics and Factors

Expulsion is a process, not merely an event....Child characteristics interact with school discipline philosophy to create differential outcomes for students with behavioral challenges....School characteristics need to be considered in the understanding of how a student comes to a school expulsion event....A school's environment may present students with challenges or assistance in the development and maintenance of appropriate school behavior.

Morrison, et al. 2001

[In order] to be effective, a disciplinary code must begin with an objective and discernable set of rules which are consistently applied.

*McDonald Brown,
et al. 1994*

A school can be characterized by the same risk factors as those identified in aggression-promoting family systems. To the degree that a school possesses those risk factors, it too, will be a stressful and aggression-generating system:

- lack of warmth and positive relationships,
- lack of clear limits and consequences,
- use of harsh and inconsistent disciplinary practices, and
- lack of adequate social and coping skills (Olweus, 1993).

Olweus also identified the following “group mechanisms” that intensify the impact of the above risk factors and increase levels of antisocial behaviors, even among students who would not generally engage in those behaviors (1993):

Group Mechanisms that Promote Antisocial Behavior

Social Contagion

Entry into school is a crossroads for high risk students. Things will either get better, or they'll get worse—depending on the balance of risk and protective factors in the school.

Studies have shown that both children and adults behave more aggressively as a result of observing someone else behave aggressively, particularly if that person is held in high regard. Over time, aggression will be seen as *the norm* if clear limits and consequences are not employed in response to antisocial behavior.

Weakening of Inhibitions

When students observe aggression (or other antisocial behavior) being “rewarded,” there tends to be a decrease in their own inhibitions toward aggression, making it more likely they'll engage in a similar behavior. A “reward” could take a variety of forms, including increased image of power and prestige, getting attention from peers, or materially gaining from theft or coercion. Simply getting away without a consequence rewards the behavior. Conversely, when students see a person get a negative consequence for behaving aggressively, their own internal controls against that behavior are strengthened.

Diffusion

When an individual is part of a group that is engaged in antisocial behavior, there is a *decreased* sense of individual responsibility, and they are more likely to participate in the behavior than if they were alone. They also experience fewer feelings of guilt or remorse afterward if they were part of a group.

The Causal Model of Antisocial Behavior

Patterson's "causal model" (1992) describes what is recognized as the "most complete and detailed explanation of the causal events and processes that account for the development and escalation of antisocial behavior." The chain of causal events begins with the family system. As previously noted, chronic family stressors can result in chaotic and destructive parenting patterns. These family systems are prone to producing children with well-established antisocial behavioral patterns by the time they enter school.

If a young child brings an antisocial pattern to school...he or she has severely elevated risk status for rejection by both peers and teachers. Peer and teacher rejection, in turn, is associated with academic failure, and the child is increasingly isolated. Because of this rejection and social isolation, the antisocial child seeks out others who share the same status, attitudes, and behavioral characteristics.

Walker, et al. 1995

Thus, internal factors, which may be structural, contextual, climate-related, and/or individualized, cause certain at-risk students to view school as an unwelcoming place, and they become alienated.

Jordan, Lara,
McPartland, 1994

In other words, if students exhibiting problem behaviors are unable to develop a bond with their peers or their teachers, they are likely to join a negative peer group. Once students gain affiliation with a "deviant" peer group having shared attitudes and behaviors, their level of risk for engaging in increasingly delinquent behaviors is significantly higher. "Seventy percent of those children have their first felony arrest within two years of becoming a fully enfranchised member of this deviant peer group....This is a highly predictable path" (Walker, et al. 1995).

As reliable as Patterson's model is in predicting serious problems with delinquency that result in expulsion and entry into the judicial system, enough is known about effective school-based strategies and the power of protective factors to interrupt that pattern. Entry into school is a crossroads for these students. Things will either get better, or they'll get worse—depending on the balance of risk and protective factors in the school.

Positive Characteristics and Protective Factors of School

For students coming to school from chronically stressed family backgrounds, their risk for suspension and expulsion will be significantly higher as a result of the *compounding effect* of the school's risk factors interacting with their family and individual risk factors. Conversely, schools that are rich in the above environmental protective factors can literally change the entire trajectory of a student's life.

The ground breaking research of Dan Olweus (1993) has demonstrated that if environmental risk factors are *inverted* into positive characteristics, they act as “countervailing forces” that buffer students from the negative impact of family risk factors.

There are certain aggression-generating factors (i.e., poor childhood conditions, certain forms of child rearing, and family problems). The degree to which a school's students will manifest [antisocial behavior] is not only dependent on the amount of aggression-generating factors....It is also largely contingent on the strength of countervailing forces. The attitudes, routines, and behaviors of the school personnel...are decisive factors in preventing and controlling...as well as in redirecting such behaviors into more socially acceptable channels.

Olweus, 1993

Following is an *inverted* version of the major school environmental risk factors. In their positive form, they are protective factors. These factors are consistently identified in the research on effective schools, prevention, positive youth development, and resiliency (Henderson, et al. 1996; Olweus, 1993; Davis, 2003; Rutter, et al. 1998; Walker, et al. 1995; Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1995 and 2001; Search Institute 2003). As protective factors, they will help counter-balance students' risk factors:

1. Emotional Connection and Bonding

The curriculum and the environment in most schools represents a mainstream point of view....This can be alienating and discouraging to students of minority cultures.

Thompson, 1991

Students feel a greater sense of engagement, belonging, and personal value when their classmates and teachers get to know them. Acting out decreases as informal structures replace rules.

McRobbie, 2001 citing Gregory, 2000

There is a sense of connection and bonding both with the school and the people in the school that results in large part from the quality of relationships and level of personalization a school is able to establish. Relationships in the school are characterized by *warmth and positive interactions* between students and their peers, as well as between students and staff, including the administrator. The principal takes a “visible and supportive role...talking informally with teachers and students, speaking to them by name, and expressing interest in their activities” (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1990). School staff *model respect* in their relationships with students, avoiding the use of sarcasm, intimidation, or anger to manage students' behavior. Students are given ample *positive attention* by staff; they acknowledge positive behavior and do things with students that are mutually enjoyable.

There is a *sense of community*, where students feel as though they *belong*. The bonds of community reach out to include students having special needs and minority students. Staff and students are provided opportunities to increase their awareness and acceptance of cultural differences.

Students have *input into decision-making* where appropriate, and have opportunities to make *meaningful contributions*. There are ample *opportunities for student involvement* in school activities (e.g., special interest clubs, peer helping, service learning or community service), including opportunities for students who are *not* athletes or traditional student leaders.

2. Clear Limits and Consequences

Behavioral limits and consequences are clearly articulated—known to all students and upheld by all staff. Research supports the use of student input and participation in the development of school rules and disciplinary practices, noting that it “creates a sense of ownership and belongingness” (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001).

Consequences are predictable and consistently applied. A study conducted to assess rates of bullying indicated that while a bullying incident occurred once every seven minutes, adults intervened only four percent of the time (Craig and Pepler, 1997). While this study was related to bullying at the elementary level, the point it makes is valid for any antisocial behavior at any grade level: When adults do not intervene, students perceive it as a lack of behavioral limits and consequences. This translates as tacit permission to engage in those behaviors.

The *consequences are consistently applied* to all students. Students will not perceive “consistent” if some students are seen to be “above the law” while others receive more frequent or more punitive consequences. Students see inconsistent treatment as unfair, and respond with feelings of resentment and lack of respect for authority. When all students are held accountable for their behavior and treated equitably, irrespective of race, gender, ethnicity, status, or behavioral “reputation,” it promotes respect for the limits and trust in the people who enforce those limits. Clearly, in order for consequences to be predictable and consistently applied, there needs to be *adequate adult supervision*.

3. Respectful Disciplinary Practices

Never underestimate the power of a child’s need to save face.

Bluestein, citing a middle school teacher, 2001.

When violations of limits occur, adults apply *non-hostile and non-punitive sanctions*. Consequences are commensurate with the level of infraction: neither too harsh nor too lenient. Care is taken to avoid “reinforcement errors” (i.e., consequences that unintentionally reinforce the problem behavior) such as working in the office after being removed from class, or suspension, which for some students is like taking a “vacation from a setting [they]...find aversive” (Bluestein, 2001).

Public embarrassment is avoided when disciplining, since this will also tend to initiate a power struggle and escalate misbehavior. According to Olweus, the

In schools having a history of high rates of suspension, “observers noted [that there were] many more authoritative behaviors (e.g., talking down to and scolding students).”

Christle, Nelseon, and Jolivet, [2002?]

most effective consequences are those that “cause some discomfort without being hostile” and that are not “directed against the person” (1993).

The best way to avoid escalation is to choose consequences that do not anger, humiliate, embarrass, or demean the student. This is especially true of high-risk students. Because they have nothing to lose by continuing the battle, the teacher has almost no leverage in getting them to back down.

Curwin, 1992

Instead of...a detention or averballashing...[students were] told to reflect on whom they had wronged and what they would do to make sure that such behavior doesn't happen again....[The high school] cut out-of-school suspensions in half in the last four years.

Snyder, 2003

While the use of consequences is essential, consequences *alone* will be limited in their effectiveness—especially for students who have social and coping skill deficits. In order to promote authentic and lasting behavioral change, disciplinary systems need to include components designed to promote reflection and to teach, guide, and support the desired changes in behavior (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1995). Use of out-of-school suspension is avoided whenever possible, “making use instead of in-school suspension accompanied by assistance and support” (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1995).

Discipline is carried out in a neutral, matter-of-fact manner. The presence of negative emotions on the part of the adult will shift the focus from the behavior to the relationship level. Ultimately, this shift will interfere with the student’s ability to *learn* from the intervention, and will risk escalating their anger and misbehavior. It will also damage the adult’s relationship with the student—thus reducing their ability to be a positive influence. For those students coming from an aggression-generating family system, any form of hostility will only serve to reinforce their belief that aggression and power are effective ways to meet their need.

4. Social and Coping Skill-Building

...learning prosocial skills can lead to improvements in student relationships, behavior, attitudes, cooperation and achievement, and help to eliminate negative and antisocial behaviors as well (Lantieri & Patti, 1966). These are skills that can, indeed, be taught.

Walker, et al. 1995

Social and coping skills are taught to enhance students’ ability to form positive peer and adult relationships, cope effectively with stress, and resist high-risk behaviors such as aggression/violence and chemical use. Examples of competencies taught include *empathy, problem-solving, multicultural education, anger management, impulse control, and friendship skills.*

To be truly effective, social skills interventions should be planned and offered in a similar fashion as any other academic course of study and should be considered in terms of years rather than weeks...

Mcevoy, et al. 2000, citing Walker, Stieber, and Bullis, 1997

These skills are taught beginning in kindergarten and continue through high school, and in addition to teaching the cognitive aspects related to these topics, students are provided opportunities to “practice real-life application of these skills” (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1995). Strategies such as cooperative learning, service learning, peer and cross-age tutoring/mentoring are utilized to provide opportunities that add depth and relevance to the social competencies being taught (Bluestein, 2001).

5. Parent and Community Partnerships

Strong parent and community partnerships represent an additional protective factor that is specifically relevant to the school environment.

...it is crucial to involve parents in the intervention process as much as we can. Change is certainly possible without parental involvement, but schools and students benefit when parents are involved as equal members of the team.

Davis, 2003

Parents are made to feel *welcome in the school*. They are *kept informed* of school goals, activities, and challenges—and have *opportunities for involvement and input*. Proactive steps are taken to develop *positive relationships* with parents, especially those with students having known antisocial behavioral patterns. Recognizing that many of these parents may have a history of negative contact with school, efforts are made through regular phone calls, notes, and meetings to let them know the school *cares about their child* and also sees their child’s *positive traits and successes*. Contacts are made with these parents early in the year for no other purpose than to *tell them about “things their child is doing right”* (Davis, 2003). This can lay a foundation for including parents in a positive intervention process when problem behaviors occur. When there is a problem, *parents’ thoughts and concerns are listened to with respect*, with as many suggestions being acted upon as possible (Davis, 2003)—while still maintaining the standards and consistency of the school’s discipline policy.

...simply seeking to increase parental involvement in school activities may not necessarily be helpful....The particular ways in which parent-school interactions are dealt with are probably crucial.

Rutter, 1998

There are also *strong partnerships with the community*, enabling the school to draw upon its resources for needed support and services: community service and service learning programs, mentoring programs, speakers for classroom presentations, funding, and services for students in need of community supports (e.g., mental health services, substance abuse treatment, social supports).

Researchers have generally found that well-disciplined schools are those which have a high level of communication and partnership with the communities they serve. These schools have a higher-than-average incidence of parent involvement in school functions, and communities are kept informed of school goals and activities.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001

6. Early Intervention/Support Services

In view of the school's legal and educational responsibilities, *early intervention with identifiable problem behaviors* is critical and acts as an additional protective factor. The school recognizes the need to address *any* problem that interferes with a student's ability to succeed socially and academically in school. Therefore, there is a *formal student assistance process* in place for *early* problem identification and referral to appropriate support services, either within the school or the community. It's important that the student assistance process be responsive to a broad range of behavioral "red flags," including problems with academics, troubled family or peer relationships, chemical use, mental health concerns, and disruptive/antisocial behaviors of any kind. In addition, there is a *crisis response plan and a trained team* in place that can respond to a variety of traumatic incidents.

The presence or absence of effective prevention and intervention programs that serve students with a range of risks and abilities is likely to affect the rates of school disciplinary events.

Morrison, et al. 2001

The *school has a guidance counselor* who has time allocated for providing individual/group counseling and supporting students in need of remedial social/coping skill development (e.g., anger management, impulse control). The use of small support/skill groups is especially important with students having a history of problem behaviors. In an innovative school for high risk students in Foley, Minnesota (Turning Point School), *all* students participate in weekly support groups as part of their alternative learning program. The groups are designed to support personal growth and achievement of behavioral goals, including maintaining sobriety.

Whether providing school-based or community-based support, the goal is to intervene before problem behaviors become entrenched and potentially dangerous—and to let youth know that their school cares about them as "people" as well as "students."

The Power of School Protective Factors

Schools in the United States and Europe that have implemented strategies related to the above protective factors demonstrate the following impact on student behavior (Olweus, 1993):

- Fifty percent reduction in bullying and victimization among students
- Marked reduction in general antisocial behavior, including fighting, theft, alcohol use, vandalism, and truancy
- Significant improvements in order and discipline
- More positive social relationships
- More positive attitude toward schoolwork
- Improved attitude toward school in general

Summary

As Morrison said, “A school’s environment may present students with challenges or assistance in the development and maintenance of appropriate school behavior” (2001). Thus, whether a school’s environment presents students with additional “*challenges*” or with “*assistance*” will depend upon whether or not the adults consciously promote warm, harmonious relationships and bonding; set and uphold clear limits and consequences; and consistently use respectful disciplinary practices.

These protective factors form the basic framework for schools to provide a safe and orderly learning environment that discourages a wide range of antisocial behaviors related to suspension and expulsion. The comprehensive implementation of the above strategies can play a critical role in intervening in a disturbing and predictable path that takes students from antisocial behavior to suspension and expulsion, delinquency, and ultimately to prison. The lack of a *systemic* approach that incorporates these research-based strategies will result in an exacerbation of the very types of behavior a school is trying to prevent: truancy, academic failure, rule infractions, aggression, suspension, and expulsion.

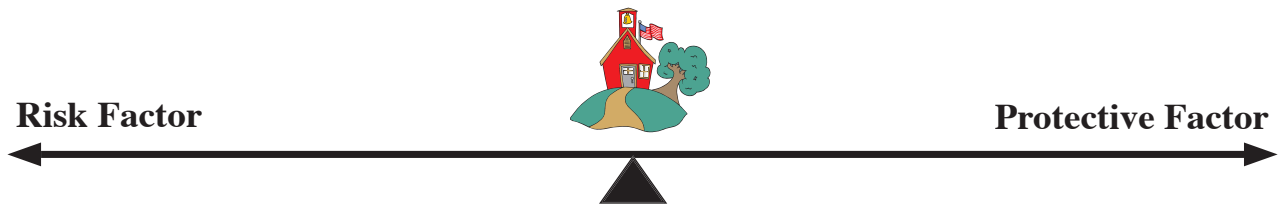
This picture of family distress, school failure and student discouragement suggests that alternative strategies to punishment for school offenses are needed to assist these students toward improved behavioral and academic trajectories.

Morrison, et al. 2001

Effective schools exert positive influences on student behavior despite conditions in the home, social status, gender, race, or ethnicity.

Mcevoy, et al. 2000

Figure 2: School Domain Risk and Protective Factors



Connectedness and Bonding to School

Is there a sense of warmth and positive interactions between students and peers, and students and adults?

How much “positive attention” do students get from teachers and administrators?

Is there a strong sense of “community” where all students feel they belong?

Do students have opportunities for involvement, meaningful roles, and opportunities for decision-making?

Limits and Consequences

How well do students and staff know what the behavioral limits and consequences are?

How consistently do all staff uphold the behavioral expectations?

Are the consequences predictable and consistently applied to all students?

Have students had input into school rules and consequences?

Respectful Disciplinary Practices

Are consequences non-punitive and commensurate with the level of infractions?

Is a reflection and learning component included as part of the consequence?

Are disciplinary interventions applied in a non-hostile manner that is neutral and matter-of-fact?

Social and Coping Skills

Are social/coping and multicultural skills taught to all students each year?

Are students who need help in deficit areas provided with skill-building opportunities?

Is the reinforcement of social/coping skills integrated into the school day in teachable moments?

Parent and Community Partnerships

Are parents made to feel welcome in school?

What opportunities are there for parents to be meaningfully involved in school?

Are proactive steps taken to provide parents with positive feedback regarding their child (including students having problems in school)?

Are there strong partnerships with the community?

Intervention/Support Services

Is there a counselor on staff who has time allocated to provide counseling and skill development?

Are there school-based support/skill groups available for students?

Is there a formal student assistance process in place for early problem identification and referral to support?

Is there a crisis response plan and trained team in place to respond to critical incidents?

D. Community Domain: Characteristics and Factors

There are many community factors identified in the literature that can affect youth risk levels: availability of alcohol and drugs; availability of firearms; community crime; economic deprivation; social disorder and lack of safety (e.g., hate crimes, vandalism and graffiti, condemned buildings); community instability (e.g., mobility and housing issues), and low attachment to the community (Development Services Group, 2002). Hawkins, et al. (1992) include “community laws and norms favorable toward drug use” to their list of community risk factors.

Some of these *risk* factors are so global in their scope that it is difficult to envision how to impact them. There are, however, some well-researched community *protective* factors that can directly influence them, especially if the effort is part of a school-community partnership. The following protective factors emerge from a broad base of research in healthy youth development and resiliency (Development Services Group, 2002; Search Institute, 2003; Henderson, et al. 1996; Pittman, 1993):

1. Presence of Caring, Supportive Adults

The most critical resiliency builder...is a basic trusting relationship, even with one adult, within the family or without, that says, “You matter.”

Werner, 1990 cited in Gelham, 1991

In order for children to have a sense of attachment and bonding to their community, they need to have positive *connections* to people within the community. It is through relationships with *individuals* that feelings of attachment extend to *institutions*, such as businesses, organizations, churches—and ultimately to the community as a whole. The research on resiliency is very clear: the presence of *at least one* caring and supportive adult is critical, particularly for those children who live with adversity and family problems. For those children, someone from outside the family can be that source of caring and support—perhaps a teacher, member of the clergy, employer, or a mentor.

What is evident from nearly all the research into the family environments of resilient children is that, “despite the burden of parental psychopathology, family discord, or chronic poverty, most children identified as resilient have had the opportunity to establish a close bond with at least one person...” (quote from Werner, 1990).

Benard, 1992

Even for children whose parents *do* provide high levels of caring and support, meaningful connections with other adults are important. Indeed, one of the protective “assets” identified by Search Institute specifically refers to the need for “nonfamily, intergenerational support.” In the words of Peter Benson

No longer can groups of people work in isolation, at cross purposes, or without the necessary understanding and support of those who are affected by their decisions.

R. Golarz and
M. Golarz, 1994

(1997), “support is not only a family enterprise. It also belongs to the larger community.”

2. High Expectations of Youth

...our society tells children and youth that “they have no real place in the scheme of things, that their only responsibility is to go to school and learn and grow up. When they have learned and grown up, which is supposed to occur miraculously at age 18, they can perhaps make some modest contribution as a citizen.”

*Benard, 1992
citing Hedin, 1987*

Children have a way of “living up” (or “living down,” as the case may be) to the expectations adults have of them. Unfortunately, in the case of communities, expectations of youth tend to be alarmingly low. One way low expectations are communicated to youth is the lack of opportunities to actively participate in community life.

Bonnie Benard points out that a “denial of opportunities” for youth to be “meaningful participants and contributors in community life” is a *natural consequence* of a community’s low expectations (Benard, 1992 citing Kurth-Schai, 1988). Using the criteria of “being given responsible roles” and “feeling valued” as indicators, studies conducted by Search Institute confirm the existence of low expectations in communities across the nation. Data from 217,000 students in grades 6–12 indicate that only 28% feel they were given useful roles in their communities and 25% believe their community values young people (1999–2000). In addition to whether or not youth are given opportunities to participate and contribute, a community’s expectations are communicated by hundreds of large and small interactions, for example, how people greet and talk to youth in public, how they are portrayed in local media, and how employers treat youth in their jobs.

The lack of opportunities to participate in community life and be treated with respect will result in youth feeling disconnected and alienated from their communities. Conversely, communities that provide youth with opportunities for participation and positive interactions will *project high expectations*. The resulting sense of “being a part of” and connections of attachment will serve as a powerful motivator for youth to “live up” to those high expectations.

3. Opportunities for Participation

The natural outcome of having high expectations for youth, for viewing youth as resources and not problems, is the creation of opportunities for them to be contributing members of their community.

Benard, 1992

Not only will the community benefit from the perspectives, talents, and energy of its young people, feelings of being needed and valued will also benefit the young people. One of the assets included in the “Empowerment” category of Search Institute’s essential building blocks is the concept of giving young people “useful roles in the community” (2003). Opportunities to make *meaningful* contributions will add to their feelings of self-esteem, competency—and to bonding with the people and institutions of their community. The importance of opportunities for involvement can also be viewed from a different perspective: “The reverse process of participation is alienation, the lack of bonding to the

social institutions like the family, the school, and the community” (Benard, 1992).

Involvement in service activities is a concept that is gaining attention as “a growing body of literature supports the power of youth involvement in service to strengthen both academic and social outcomes” (Benson, 1990 citing Moore and Allen, 1996). Search Institute data reveal that students involved in at least one hour of “helping behavior” on a weekly basis had lower rates of involvement in high-risk behaviors. Involvement in projects and programs to help others is associated with lower at-risk behavior rates (Benson, 1990).

When children are given responsibilities, the message is clearly communicated that they are worthy and capable of being contributing members of a family [school, or community].

Benard, 1992

Responsibilities and roles for youth that were once critical for the very survival of families and communities have largely been replaced by “autonomy and leisure, and [are] frequently accompanied by no adult supervision” (Benard, 1992). In effect, adolescence can be a time of “rolelessness”—leaving teens with limited positive options for directing their energy. Providing youth with opportunities to contribute *needed* service will not only build their sense of self-esteem and competency, it will also give them a meaningful *role* to play in their community—and thus, a connection.

Note: For additional information about three bodies of protective factor research, refer to Section IIIA: *Effective School Domain Strategies* and Section V: *Resources*. (See *Asset Model*, *Resiliency Model*, and *Positive Youth Development Model*.)

Unless communities begin to actively engage their young in the affairs of community—providing places and moments of connection, involvement, partnership, input, and responsibility—we risk reinforcing an anti-adult youth culture...

Benson, 1997

II. SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION: INTENT AND REALITY

 **Key Question:** *What is the intent of suspension and expulsion, and what is the reality of its impact upon students?*

Suspension and Expulsion

Suspension and expulsion remove students who are exhibiting problem behaviors from the learning environment of the school. There are a variety of ways in which students can be removed:

1. in-school suspension,
2. short-term, out-of-school suspension (10 days or less),
3. long-term, out-of-school suspension or expulsion (up to 180 days), or
4. permanent expulsion (Michigan Department of Education Pupil Accounting Manual, 2002).

The Intent

“...suspension typically is intended by the administration...as a punishment” for an “inappropriate act or behavior” (Raffaele-Mendez and Knoff, 2003), with the presumed rationale being that such punishment will motivate a behavioral change in the student. In cases where weapons are involved, an additional goal is to ensure safety in the school environment. There is a substantial amount of research and practical evidence that indicates that while the *intent* is *positive*, the overall *reality* is *negative*.

Expulsion is a process, not merely an event....When a student commits an expellable offense at school, it is often not a surprise in the context of the student's developmental history.

Morrison, et al. 2001

...if a primary goal is to reduce misbehavior, out-of-school suspension and expulsion are completely counter-productive...

Building Blocks for Youth, 2003

The Reality

“Zero tolerance” began as a prohibition against guns, but it has quickly expanded into a frenzy of punishment and tougher disciplinary measures in American schools. Ironically...recent research indicates that as schools adopt more zero tolerance policies they in fact become less safe, in part because the first casualties of these measures are the central, critical relationships between teacher and student and between school and community.

W. Ayers, Dohrn, and R. Ayers, 2001

Not only have suspension and expulsion been found to be ineffective (Morrison, et al. 2001), they are likely to result in a number of negative student outcomes. “Repeated suspensions for minor misbehavior convey a clear message to young people that the school system is authoritarian and arbitrary, and does not value

them as individuals” (Building Blocks for Youth, 2003). The consequences of arbitrary or overly punitive discipline are costly: students respond with anger, resentment, mistrust, and disconnection from the authority figures in school—which is only a step away from disconnection from school and learning. The likely outcome of “tough” disciplinary actions is an increase in anti-authority and antisocial behavior.

People’s responses to levels of punishment are influenced by their feelings on its fairness and reasonableness (Hart, 1978). If harsh punishments are viewed as discriminatory and unreasonable, the main result may be an increase in resentment and a correspondingly reduced general deterrence effect.

Rutter, et al. 1998

Expelling a child from school may act to further alienate him or her from the learning environment and those in it, and may even intensify those troubling behaviors targeted for elimination.

Morrison, et al. 2001

Furthermore, suspension and expulsion can create “educational gaps from which many students cannot recover” resulting in *academic failure, grade retention, and dropping out of school* (Raffaele-Mendez, et al. 2003 citing Brooks, Schiraldi, and Ziedenberg, 1999; Nichols, Ludwin, & Iadicola, 1999). These unintended consequences set the stage for a domino effect of additional negative behaviors and consequences, including *teenage pregnancy* and increasingly serious *antisocial and delinquent behaviors* that result in involvement in the *juvenile court system* (Clark, et al. 2003). Thus, instead of decreasing problem behaviors, suspension and expulsion are likely to increase them.

Out-of-school suspension and expulsion interrupt students’ educational progress and remove students from school at a time when they may most need stability and guidance in their lives...[making it] impossible for the students to keep up with the curriculum....Even more ominously, suspensions and expulsions reduce adult supervision and give students unstructured time in which to get in trouble.

Building Blocks for Youth, 2003

Zero Tolerance—and Suspension and Expulsion

In spite of the data indicating the ineffectiveness of removal from school, its use has increased during the past decade. Out-of-school suspensions “are one of the most commonly used forms of discipline in the United States” (Raffaele-Mendez, et al. 2003 citing Dupper and Bosch, 1996). This rise is due, in part, to the introduction of “zero tolerance” policies in the early 1990s (Skiba, Peterson, Boon, and Fonatanini, 2000). In response to concerns of an increase in juvenile homicides with firearms and fear of school violence, Congress passed the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994, which “required states to expel firearm-carrying students for at least one calendar year” (Building Blocks for Youth, 2003). The concept of “zero tolerance” held great appeal as a “no-nonsense response” to fears of school violence (Skiba, et al. 2000). Not only did the “hard line”

approach increase in frequency of use since the early 1990s, the range of behaviors that carry mandated suspension and expulsion has also increased.

Since the passage of the federal Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994, Michigan's legislature has enacted a series of laws requiring expulsion (or suspension) for a number of offenses, extending far beyond the firearm violations that are the subject of the federal laws.

Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003

According to data compiled by the Michigan Public Policy Initiative, "Michigan's policies are particularly stringent" in comparison with national norms. In addition to the consequences for firearm violations required by the Gun-Free Schools Act, they include *mandated* expulsion for the following behaviors: possession of a dangerous weapon, arson, criminal sexual conduct on school grounds, and physical assault against a school employee. Michigan law requires suspension or expulsion for physical fighting and assaults against other students (even if no weapon was involved), and verbal assaults against school employees or volunteers (2003). Students have also been suspended or expelled for use of disobedience, theft, vandalism, alcohol/drug use, possession of drugs, and drug distribution (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003). In some schools, zero tolerance includes the "use of pagers or laser pointers, and sexual harassment" (Skiba, 2000 citing Skiba and Peterson, 1999).

...students viewed most disciplinary problems as resulting from rules that were unjust or unfairly applied....Students who are already at-risk for disruption may see confrontational discipline as a challenge to escalate their behavior.

*Skiba, 2000
citing Gottredson, 1989*

Another example of the stringency of Michigan's policy is the fact that while the federal law allows for some discretion by the administrator, Michigan law does not:

...the current federal law requires that the "chief administering officer" of the local educational agency have the authority to modify the expulsion requirement in any particular case, Michigan's statute does not explicitly include this requirement of discretion.

Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003

Clearly, violent behavior and dangerous assaults against staff should not be tolerated. However, the literature indicates that the vast majority of suspensions and expulsions are "misbehaviors" that are "adolescent, but not violent" (Building Blocks for Youth, 2003).

While it is difficult to ascertain just how many students are expelled from Michigan schools each year because data are not routinely collected and reported to a central source and because data are not collected in uniform ways....It is estimated that more than 3,600 students were expelled from Michigan schools during academic year 1999-2000....Many of these students were expelled for behaviors that once would have been considered nothing more than adolescent antics or poor judgment.

Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003

A study conducted by Morrison and D’Incau (1997) indicated that nationally, only about 20% of the students disciplined as a result of zero tolerance policy represented the types of infractions that the policy was intended to address: threats to school safety (Holloway, 2001/2002). In Michigan, only 16% of expulsions involved a weapon and 38% of expulsions were for fighting without a weapon (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003).

Push effects are factors located within the school itself, which negatively impact the connection adolescents make with the school’s environment and cause them to reject the context of schooling. This rejection...may manifest in disruptive behavior, absenteeism, or a cessation of academic effort.

Jordan, et al. 1994

Data consistently show that...referrals for drugs, weapons, and gang-related behaviors constitute but a small minority of office referrals leading to suspension. Fighting among students is the single most frequent reason for suspension, but the majority of suspensions occur in response to relatively minor incidents that do not threaten school safety. At the middle school level, disrespect and disobedience are among the most common reasons for suspension, and a significant proportion...are for tardiness and truancy.

Skiba, et al. 1999

In addition, there is evidence that suspensions and expulsions are not reserved as a last resort for non-violent infractions after other interventions have failed. Students are sometimes removed from school after a first offense to set an example:

An assault in the fourth degree, which is a misdemeanor, may be as simple as a school yard fight where one student got the upper hand... school officials may “overcharge” a student for a particular incident in order to “send a message” to the child, his friends, his parents, and the court.

Building Blocks for Youth, 2003

Misuses of Suspension and Expulsion

Confusing Terminology and Misapplication

Both in Michigan and across the nation, there are indications of confusion and misuse of the zero tolerance policy in interpreting and/or administering suspensions and expulsions. There are instances where there has been a very loose interpretation of terms, such as “assault,” “arson” or “weapon.” There have been examples where the definition of “weapon” was interpreted to include “key chains” (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003 citing Noguera, 2001), and “toenail clippers” (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003 citing Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2000). There are also instances of ridiculous interpretations of the term, such as classifying “chicken fingers” as a weapon (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003 citing Light, 2001).

While there is a tendency to assume that examples such as these are infrequent “aberrations” resulting from “overzealous administration,” Skiba finds that the pervasiveness with which these sorts of things happen “across time and location suggests that the over-extension of school sanctions to minor misbehavior is

not anomalous, rather it is inherent in the philosophy and application of zero tolerance” (2000).

Pushouts

Another misuse of zero tolerance policies includes the use of suspension and expulsion to literally “push” students out of school who are viewed as low-achieving and troublesome students. “Schools want to get rid of the troublemakers and the kids who bring down the test cores (Dohrn, 2001).

In ethnographic studies, school disciplinarians report that suspension is sometimes used as a tool to “push out” particular students, to encourage “troublemakers” or those perceived as unlikely to succeed in school to leave.

Skiba, et al. 1999 citing Bowditch, 1993 and Fine, 1986

Multiple short-term suspensions, which can be given at the school’s discretion without formal proceedings, can be a form of “push out.” When given in a series, short-term suspensions “cumulatively, reflect a loss of learning time which equals a long-term suspension or expulsion” (McDonald Brown, et al. 1994). The consequences of a significant loss in learning time are not difficult to predict: problems keeping up academically and increased feelings of disconnection from school—which frequently result in students dropping out.

Sometimes the process of pushing a student out of school is more subtle, consisting of “failing to follow up when a student is absent, ignoring the student when he or she does come to school, or making it clear that the student is not expected to work or achieve at school, only to be quiet and behave” (Thompson, ed. 1991). These things can result in the student disconnecting from school. They internalize the message that they aren’t wanted in school and they can’t succeed academically—setting the stage for behavioral problems that lead to suspension or expulsion or dropping out of school.

There is a disturbing pattern of disproportionate use of suspension and expulsion policies for certain populations: students having special needs, minority students, and young students (Morrison, et al. 2001).

Special Needs Students

...special needs students are caught often in the web of zero-tolerance....Case histories and demographic descriptions of excluded students have revealed a heterogeneous group, very few of whom presented real or serious dangers to students or staff.

Morrison, et al. 2001

Students having special needs are disproportionately expelled, both on the national level (Morrison, et al. 2001) and in Michigan (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003). According to the Student Advocacy Center (2002), 71% of the students expelled during the 1999-2000 school year had special needs. Of

As risk indicators, conduct problems and ADHD are particularly deserving of “red flags” in terms of risk for future recommendations for expulsion (Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber, 1998).

Morrison, et al. 2000

those, 19.6% were “special education certified or were receiving protections under the Rehabilitation Act of 1976.” The remainder had identifiable emotional problems, including ADHD (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003).

Minority Students

Unfortunately, minority students continue to be grossly over-represented when rates of suspension are compared...[they] are more likely to be disciplined (a) for minor offenses and (b) with disproportionately higher levels of punishment or intensive intervention.

Raffaele-Mendez, et al. 2003 citing Morrison and D’Incau, 1997

...every human encounter—positive or negative—reflects cultural assumptions upon which communication rules are based....School personnel are more likely to perceive students’ behaviors, including their communicative behaviors, as being disruptive and discordant when those behaviors diverge from the norms of the school.

*Northwest Regional
Educational Laboratory,
2001*

Data presented in *Zero Tolerance Policies and Their Impact on Michigan Students* indicate that Michigan youth of color are suspended and expelled at a higher rate than white students. African American students are affected the most. Although they represent only 17% of school enrollment, African American students constitute 39.1% of Michigan’s expulsions and are being suspended at a rate that is 2.5 times that of the general population of students. (It is interesting to note that according to Nichols (1999) race was a factor in communities with moderate-income levels. The effect of race was *not* seen in the poorer communities—rather, in those communities, poverty seemed to be a more significant factor, with boys who qualified for free or reduced lunch being more than twice as likely to be removed as were their peers whose families did not qualify for free or reduced school lunch.) Latino students were suspended at 1.4 times and Native American students 1.3 times the rate of the general student population (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003).

National studies indicate similar disproportionate rates of suspension and expulsion for students of color. They are over-represented even after controlling for factors related to socio-economic differences and the types of misbehavior (Skiba, et al. 1999). Skiba found that schools that rely most heavily on suspension and expulsion as a general practice to address misbehavior show the “highest rates of minority over-representation.”

Cross-cultural communication could play a role in the disproportionate number of minority students being suspended and expelled. Because 5 of the 9 most commonly reported behaviors “involve cultural and communicative issues, e.g., verbal threats, classroom disruptions and disrespect,” this factor warrants exploration.

Students with cultural and communicative norms which are incongruous with the school’s norms are more likely...to engage in unacceptable behavior....School personnel should be open to examining the causes of perceived misbehavior in the classroom.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001

Young Students

Generally speaking, the students affected by zero tolerance policies are not the older, tougher students the law may have been created to address...students...(grades 6-9) were expelled at higher rates than any other age group during academic year 1999-2000 [in Michigan].

Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003

The report goes on to say that 14 is the most common age for expulsion in the State of Michigan. This is consistent with national data regarding exclusion of students in middle school. Students in grades 6-9 are undergoing tremendous physical, cognitive, social, and emotional transitions. Moving from elementary to secondary levels is a significant transition in itself—it is a time “where they encounter school environments that are larger, less personal, and require greater self-control and self-direction” (Raffaele-Mendez, et al. 2003). It is a pivotal time when students’ need for support and guidance is increasing, and the availability of guidance and support, by virtue of the contextual structure of middle and high schools, is decreasing. Exclusionary consequences without *structured opportunities to learn* from mistakes, especially during this developmental time period, can lead to long-term academic failure and dropping out of school.

It's time for schools to develop legitimate high standards by refusing to fall for the lure of what is easy and sounds good and choosing instead what is truly best for children.

*Holloway, 2001/2002
citing Curwin and
Mendler, 1999*

Male Students

Data gathered by the Family Independence Agency in Michigan indicate that 65% of students expelled from schools in 1999 were male (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003). The Student Advocacy Center of Michigan presents an even “more troubling picture” based upon an analysis of 91 expulsion cases from 1999 to 2000: 82.4% of Michigan expulsions involved males. This last figure is more closely in line with national suspension data indicating that males are being suspended at a rate that is approximately twice that of females (Raffaele-Mendez, et al. 2003).

Summary

In summary, the scope and use of suspension and expulsion have gone far beyond the intent of the original policies and legislation of the 1990s. There are schools that overly rely on suspension and expulsion as the mainstay of their discipline policy, excluding students as a first step rather than reserving it as a last resort for chronic problems or for potentially dangerous situations. There are also schools that misinterpret and misuse zero tolerance policies, often at the expense of special needs students, minority students, and young students (grades 6-9).

The data regarding the effectiveness of suspension and expulsion as part of a harsh “zero tolerance” disciplinary strategy are consistent and clear: *Suspension and expulsion are not effective*. They are not effective in promoting a positive behavioral change within individual students, and in fact are likely to compound

students' problem behavior. Nor are they necessarily effective in creating a safer school; they can even result in a "less safe" learning environment.

That being said, *there are definitely times when it is necessary to use suspension and expulsion*. However, there are a number of strategies that will 1) *decrease* the number of times it is necessary to use suspension and expulsion, and 2) *increase* their effectiveness on those occasions when it is necessary to use them.

Eliminating zero tolerance policies is a hard sell because the concept is simple to understand, sounds tough, and gives the impression of high standards for behavior....Any intervention for changing children's behavior that is simple is simple-minded, and those that substitute formulas for decisions made by people who understand the circumstances are dangerous. It's time for schools to develop legitimate high standards by refusing to fall for the lure of what is easy and sounds good and choosing instead what is truly best for children.

Holloway, 2001/2002 citing Curwin and Mendler, 1999

The following recommendations (bold type) appear as strategies to reduce suspensions and expulsions in the Michigan Public Policy Initiative publication, "Zero Tolerance Policies and Their impact on Michigan Students" (2003). They are taken from the work of Pedro A. Noguera ("Finding Safety Where We Least Expect It") that appears in *Zero Tolerance: Resisting the Drive for Punishment in Our Schools* (2001).

In a study of 988 schools, researchers found that for every 400-student increase in the high school population, there would be approximately a one percent rise in the dropout rate.

*Southwest Educational
Development Laboratory,
1994*

Michigan Public Policy Initiative Recommendations

1) Reduce anonymity, alienation and the impersonal character of schools.

A common feature of many large schools is that the connections between adults and students are weak, and, as a result, many students lack consistent meaningful contact with adults.

Noguera, 2001

There is a significant body of literature that indicates that small schools may have an advantage in being able to provide environments that promote feelings of connection and bonding (McRobbie, 2001). A meta-analysis of the literature comparing large schools to small schools on a number of categories indicates that the ideal size for secondary schools is 400-500 students (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1996). While developing a sense of community may be easier to accomplish in small schools, there are many things large schools can do to meet the social and

emotional needs of students, such as creation of schools or academies within a school, advisor/advisee programs, homerooms, student assistance programs, block scheduling, reducing the number of students assigned to counselors, mentoring programs, etc.

2) Promote a climate of respect by responding quickly and consistently to minor infractions.

...responding to minor offenses sends the strong message that any attempt to undermine the values of a school community will be addressed immediately.

Noguera, 2001

“Zero tolerance” doesn’t have to mean: “Step out of line and *you’re out!*” It can mean: “Step out of line, and *we will respond.*” It’s critically important to respond “quickly and consistently to minor infractions” so students know what the behavioral expectations are and that the expectations will be upheld. However, it is equally important to respond to infractions with consequences that are fair and that are implemented without violating the dignity of the student. As educators, in order to *teach* respect, we must *model* respect—even when disciplining.

3) Adopt a preventative approach to discipline utilizing strategies that encourage students to take responsibility for their behavior and learn from their mistakes.

...discipline should not be used to exacerbate poor attendance or academic performance. Rather, whenever possible, students should be encouraged to learn from mistakes, and punishments should be designed to encourage reflection on their behavior.

Noguera, 2001

There are many strategies that encourage reflection and learning, including a guided, written reflection process; transformative conferences; community service; after-school tutoring; and peer mediation. For students who have a pattern of anti-social behavior, consequences alone will not help them learn, or be motivated to use, pro-social skills. They need consequences *plus* reflection and skill-building in order to learn from their mistakes.

[The problem is that suspension and expulsion rarely have] “a logical, functional, or instructive connection to the offense or infraction; and it usually occurs in the absence of additional interventions that focus on teaching or reinforcing students’ more prosocial or appropriate responses to difficult situations.”

Raffaele-Mendez, et al. 2003

4) Provide numerous opportunities for students to become more deeply engaged in school and activities that further their development.

There are three aspects to the concept of engagement: 1) extracurricular engagement, 2) social engagement, and 3) intellectual engagement. With regards to *extracurricular engagement*, when students are involved in activities in the school that require practice, they’re busy. They simply have less free time on their hands in which they might become involved in antisocial activities. With regard to *social engagement*, providing time for students to develop positive social relationships will help them feel

accepted and like “they belong.” This will help minimize bullying and harassment problems in school, and consequently help ensure a safer environment. Lastly, students who are *intellectually engaged* are less likely to misbehave and get into trouble. They are more likely to enjoy learning and like school—and have an investment in their academic success.

...researchers have found that teachers who are able to intellectually engage their students are less likely to experience disruptions or other problematic behavior.

Noguera, 2001 citing Alschuler, 1994

There are many ways to promote engagement in students, including providing: 1) a wider range of extracurricular activities (e.g., art clubs, chess clubs, informal sports); 2) experiential learning activities (e.g., ropes courses, team initiatives); 3) service learning projects; 4) brain-compatible learning strategies (strategies based on the neuroscience of learning); and 5) school-to-work programs.

The Michigan Department of Education adds one more recommendation to those suggested by Noguera:

5) Provide early intervention and treatment for at-risk students, particularly those who have been identified as having mental health concerns.

Students who receive help and support to deal with pressing personal concerns [and challenges] will be able to focus their remaining energy more efficiently on their schoolwork and important tasks of developing academically, socially, and emotionally.

Newsam, 1992

What is the function or purpose of the acting out behavior? Is it linked to unresolved academic or social problems? Is the teacher receiving adequate support in trying to manage the student's behavior? Unfortunately, although suspension can protect the interests of other students, and staff, it often is not functionally linked to the core problem that results in the suspension.

Raffaele-Mendez, et al. 2003

In view of the number of Michigan students who have been suspended or expelled with a wide variety of identifiable mental health concerns, it is essential to have a formal procedure to gather and analyze information regarding a student's problem behavior and determine what sort of support services are needed. Comprehensive Student Assistance Programs are designed to perform both functions: 1) gather and analyze information, and 2) identify appropriate support services. The range of support services might include in-school supports, such as participation in an anger-management group, being connected to a peer mentor, or receiving special education services. They might also include out-of-school referrals for professional mental health services. For students having chronic behavioral problems, a functional behavioral assessment may also be useful.

Thus, schools need to have procedures in place to functionally analyze the reasons for a student's multiple suspensions, and when a student is

suspended repeatedly to determine if the behavior is a reflection of a specific disability (IDEA, 1999)...Moreover, for students with chronic behavior problems, it is recommended that schools work with families and community agencies to develop strategies for school-lined and wrap-around services and problem-solving interventions.

Raffaele-Mendez, et al. 2003

The above recommendations incorporate all of the protective factors identified in Section I: *(School Domain)*. When implemented, they work together to develop a balance of “social capital” with students. The resulting bonds of respect and “reciprocity” not only promote safe and orderly schools, but also contribute to a successful learning environment. By creating a safer and more positive learning environment, we will ultimately decrease the number of times it is *necessary* to suspend or expel students.

And for those students whose behavior calls for suspension or expulsion, the research calls for us to think creatively and find ways to keep students connected to the larger learning community while they are out of the regular school setting. Strategies to increase the effectiveness of suspension and expulsion will be addressed in more detail in Section III: *From Research to Practice: Strategies for Making Connections*.

It also is very important for schools to have alternatives to suspension available. Although there are times when students must be removed from their regular classrooms, this does not mean that they have to be completely removed from a school’s broader learning environment. Some schools have in-school suspension programs available. Others have alternative suspension sites where students can be supervised on the day(s) of their suspensions. Still others use Saturday School programs for some suspensions. Regardless, it is recommended that in-school suspension and alternative-to-suspension programs:

- (a) involve a rehabilitative component (as opposed to being strictly punishment-oriented),*
- (b) actively involve parents (e.g., by requiring parent involvement at the alternative site), and*
- (c) be linked to other support services for students and families (e.g., through collaborative partnerships with local social service agencies).*

In the end, a focus on the goal of suspension must be maintained: to understand why the inappropriate behavior is occurring, to develop and implement remedial interventions, and to decrease or eliminate the occurrence of future inappropriate behavior and suspensions.

Raffaele-Mendez, et al. 2003

III. FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE: STRATEGIES FOR MAKING CONNECTIONS

Key Question: *How can we help suspended and expelled students connect to their schools, the people in their schools, to learning, to their communities, and to themselves?*

A. Structured Community Domain Strategies

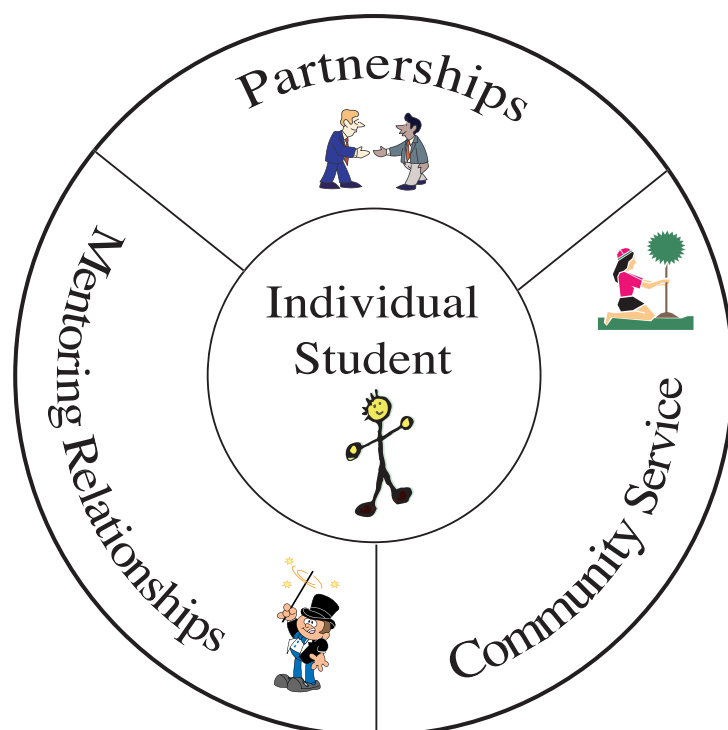


Figure 3: Community Domain Environmental Protective Factors

There are protective factors in the community that can promote students' social and academic education. While research indicates *all* students can benefit from school connections with the community, they play a particularly critical role for students serving out-of-school suspensions or expulsions who find themselves excluded from the school's learning environment at a time when they most need structure and supportive relationships. There are three major components in the Community Domain that can serve as a "delivery system" for numerous protective factors:

1. Community Partnerships
2. Community Service Projects
3. Mentoring Programs

Note: Descriptions of specific strategies in each of the three components will be described in the next installment of the Resource Guide!

The full integration of schools into neighborhood and community life can do much to rebuild the social infrastructure that has been so devastated by the social and economic problems of the past quarter century.

Walker, 1995

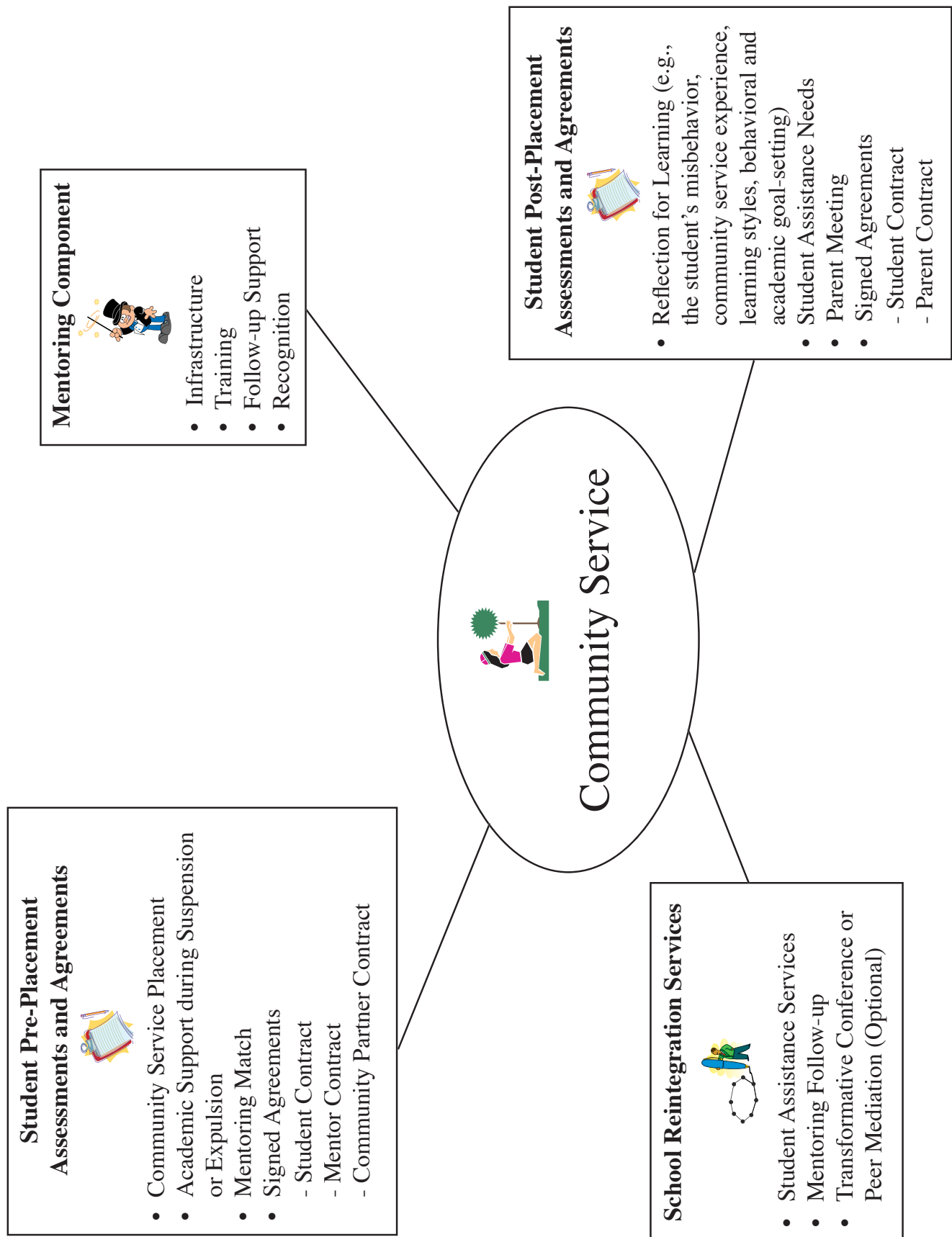


Figure 4: Community Service Mindmap

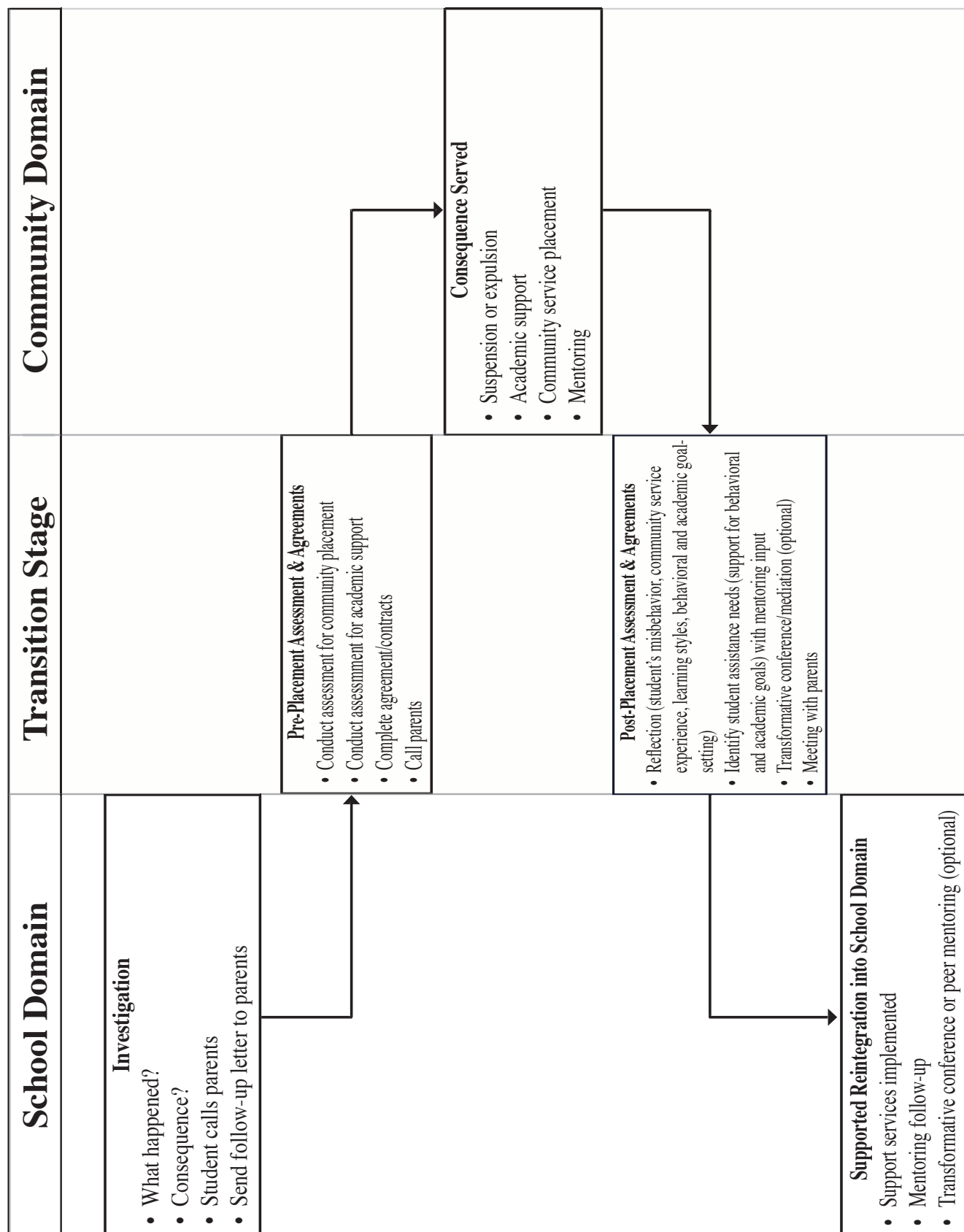


Figure 5: Domain Flow Chart for IIP (Individual Intervention Process) Suspended or Expelled Students

B. Effective School Domain Strategies

The most common characteristic of...safe schools is a strong sense of community. It is also not a coincidence that these schools are also places where students and teachers feel supported, where students are academically engaged, and where trust, respect, and norms of reciprocity are sufficient to promote behavior that is conducive to high levels of involvement and support from the parents and the communities they serve. Safety at these schools is a by-product of supportive social capital, one of few school reforms that actually cost very little.

Noguera, 2001

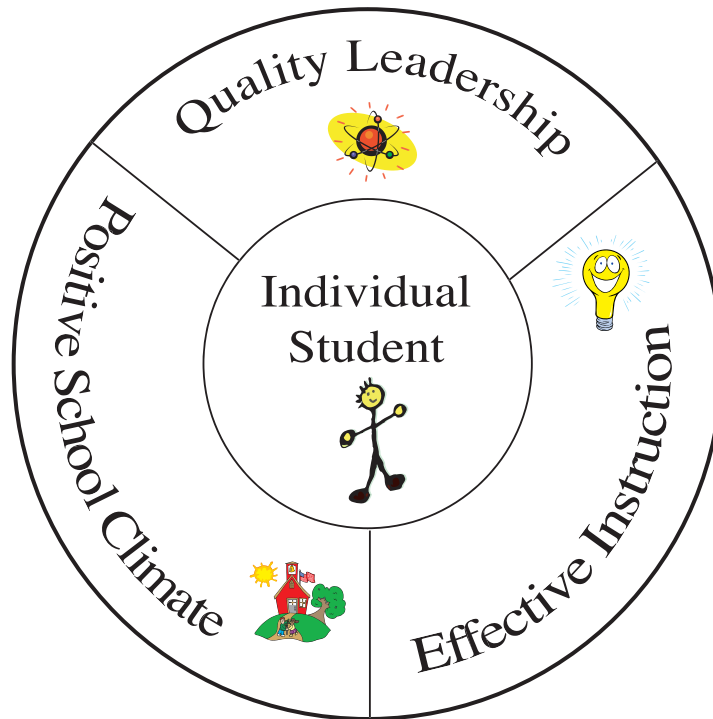


Figure 6: School Domain Environmental Protective Factors

There are three components in the Effective School Domain that are based upon the findings of a meta-analysis of research conducted by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (2001) to determine, “characteristics which distinguish effective schools...schools in which all students master priority objectives.”

1. Quality Leadership
2. Positive School Climate
3. Effective Instruction

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory research article that inspired this categorization (“Effective Schooling Practices and At-Risk Youth: What the Research Shows”) is reprinted with permission in Section V: *Resources*. An *Effective Schools Survey* is also included in that same section that schools can use as a self-assessment tool. The hope is that schools can identify their current strengths and needs, and use that information to develop a long-term plan for systemic change that will result in “keeping kids in school” with increased student success, both academically and socially!

Note: On the following pages is an overview of the projected research-based strategies that relate to each of the above components that will be described, along with a rationale, in the next installment of the Resource Guide.

Overview of Strategies for Effective Schools

1. Quality Leadership

Note: This section will include descriptions and research regarding effective instructional leadership and organizational systems change.

2. Positive School Climate

(a) Positive Strength-Based Relationships

(e.g., student-student, staff-student, staff-staff, staff-parents, school-community)

- Asset-Development/Resiliency (underlying philosophy and focus)
- Mentoring (formal/informal; intergenerational/peer)
- Social/Coping Skills (conflict resolution/problem-solving skills curriculum)
- Character Education Curriculum
- Cultural Competence (for students and staff)
- Competence in De-Escalation and Non-Verbal Communication
- Strong Parent Partnerships
- Strong Community Partnerships

(b) Clear Limits and Consequences

- Written Behavioral Expectations and Consequences (clearly communicated to all students, staff, and parents)
- Effective Consequences (fair, incremental, non-punitive, and designed for learning, i.e., they include structured reflection and remedial skill-building opportunities)
- Bullying /Harassment Prevention Program
- Transformative/Restorative Conferencing
- Alternatives to Out-of-School Suspension and Expulsion
- Structured Support Programs for Suspended (out-of-school) and expelled students (e.g., Community Service)
(See *Section III: Figure 4: Community Service Mindmap* and *Figure 5: Domain Flow Chart*)

(c) Opportunities for Student Leadership and Involvement

- Opportunities for Student Input into School Rules and Procedures (meaningful involvement)

- Opportunities for Student Activities and Recognition (including a *variety* of talents and interest areas)

(d) Student Support Services


- Student Assistance Program (identification and referral to in-school and community-based services)
- Functional Behavioral Assessments
- School-Based Counseling and Support/Skill Groups
- Crisis Response Capacity (written plan and staff trained to Respond to critical incidents)

(e) Attractive, Well-Kept School and Grounds

3. Effective Instruction

- Use of Neuroscience-Based Strategies (group interaction, multiple teaching modes, graphic organizers/mind maps, projects, experiential activities, layered curriculum, facilitation techniques, etc.)
- Cooperative Learning
- Service Learning

IV. PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION: THE CHANGE PROCESS

 **Key Question:** *How do we motivate and maintain a systems change that will prevent suspensions and expulsions and promote student success for all?*

...consider the American penchant for ignoring the structural causes of problems. We prefer the simplicity and satisfaction of holding individuals responsible for whatever happens: crime, poverty, school failure, what have you. Thus, even when one high school crisis is followed by another, we concentrate on the particular people involved—their values, their character, their personal failings—rather than asking whether something about the systems in which these students find themselves might also need to be addressed.

Kohn, 1999

...until recently we have attempted to alter education in a piecemeal fashion.

Golarz, 1994

The new problem of change, then...is what would it take to make the educational system a learning organization—expert at dealing with change as a normal part of its work, not just in relation to the latest policy [reform initiative, education or prevention strategy], but as a way of life.

Fullan, 1993

Note: Descriptions of specific strategies for an effective systems change process will be described in the next installment of the Resource Guide!

V. RESOURCES

Key Question: *What resources are available?*

The following categories of resources will be included in this section upon completion:

- A. Annotated Bibliography of Research Articles and Books
- B. Community Service Grant Contact Information:
 - 1) SAPE Technical Support Consultants
 - 2) Michigan Department of Education Project Director
 - 3) Project Evaluator
- C. Assessment and Planning Tools

A. Annotated Bibliography of Research Articles and Books

The following articles and books are recommended reading. A more complete Annotated Bibliography will be added at a later time:

Articles:

- 1) Commission on Children at Risk. “Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities.” 2003. <<http://www.americanvalues.org/html/hardwired.html>>.

An excellent article describing research on the importance of connections.
- 2) Druian, Greg, and Jocelyn A. Butler. “Effective Schooling Practices and At-Risk Youth: What the Research Shows.” *School Improvement Research Series* 2001. Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. <<http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/1/topsyn1.html>>.

This article provides an overview of the three components of the Effective Schools Domain.
- 3) Michigan Public Policy Initiative. “Zero Tolerance Policies and Their Impact on Michigan Students: Zero Tolerance Policies in Context.” *Spotlight* January 2003. <http://www.mnaonline.org/pdf/spotlight%202002_12.pdf>.

This document provides an excellent overview of the zero tolerance policy and its application in Michigan. It includes data related to suspension and expulsion and recommendations for change.

Books:

- 4) Bluestein, Jane. *Creating Emotionally Safe Schools: A Guide for Educators and Parents*. Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, 2001.

This book provides one of the most comprehensive overviews of a systems approach to creating an educationally sound and safe school environment. It's highly recommended.

- 5) Gallegos, Arnold, ed. *School Expulsions, Suspensions, and Dropouts: Understanding the Issues*. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa International, 1998.

This volume includes a collection of nearly 30 excellent articles related to suspension, expulsion, and drop outs. Examples of topics addressed include: causal structures, impact, cultural disproportion of Native American students, legal issues, dress codes and gang activity, school uniforms, classroom management, alternative education programs for expelled students, vocational entrepreneurship for youthful offenders, in-school suspension, anger management for students, truancy, and block schedule restructuring.

- 6) Jensen, Eric. *Different Brains, Different Learners: How to Reach the Hard to Reach*. San Diego: The Brain Store, 2000.

This is a user-friendly book that describes the neuroscience behind a variety of learning and behavioral impairments—along with strategies for educators.

- 7) Olweus, Dan. *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1993.

Dan Olweus conducted the ground breaking research upon which current state-of-the-art bullying prevention programming is based.

B. Community Service Grant Contact Information

1) SAPE Technical Support Consultants

CALHOUN ISD (17111 G. Drive N, Marshall, MI 49068)

Guy Golomb	Work phone	269-781-5141
	Work fax	269-781-8792
	E-mail	golombg@calhoun-isd.k12.mi.us

EATON ISD (1790 E. Packard Hwy., Charlotte, MI 48813)

Charlotte Koger	Work phone	517-543-5500 ext. 1161
	Work fax	517-543-4870
	E-mail	ckoger@eaton.k12.mi.us

Sara Lurie	Work phone	517-543-5500 ext. 1111
	Work fax	517-543-4870
	E-mail	slurie@eaton.k12.mi.us

Polly Brainerd	Work phone	517-543-5500 ext. 1239
	Work fax	517-543-4870
	E-mail	pbrainer@eaton.k12.mi.us

Martha Neilsen	Home phone	517-627-4703
	E-mail	neilsenrm@comcast.net

KENT ISD (2930 Knapp St. NE Rd., Grand Rapids, MI 49525)

John Belaski	Work phone	616-365-2270
	Work fax	616-364-1489
	E-mail	johnbelaski@kentisd.org

MACOMB ISD (44001 Garfield Rd., Clinton Twp., MI 48038-1100)

Lucy Smith	Work phone	586-228-3491
	Work fax	586-286-2809
	E-mail	lsmith@misd.net

MARQUETTE-ALGER RESA (321 East Ohio. St., Marquette, MI 49855)

Dee Lindenberger	Work phone	906-226-5122
	Work fax	906-226-5141
	E-mail	dlinden@maresa.k12.mi.us
	Michigan Toll Free	1-800-562-7868

WAYNE RESA (33500 Van Born Rd., Wayne, MI 48184-2497)

Kathy Gibson	Work phone	734-334-1608
	Work fax	734-334-1218
	E-mail	gibsonk@resa.net

2) Michigan Department of Education (Project Director)

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION Office of Safe Schools,

John A. Hannah Building, 608 West Allegan St., P.O. Box 30008 Lansing , Mi 48909

Bob Higgins

Work phone

517-373-1024

Work fax

517-373-1233

E-mail

higginsr@michigan.gov

3) O'Neill Consulting/Madonna University (Project Evaluator)

MADONNA UNIVERSITY (36600 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia, MI 48150)

Jim O'Neill

Work phone

734-432-5734

Work fax

734-432-5393

E-mail

joneill@madonna.edu

C. Assessment and Planning Tools

The *Connections Effective Schools Survey* is included as a self-assessment tool designed to help schools identify their strengths and needs in each of the three components of the school domain:

- A. Quality Leadership
- B. Positive School Climate
- C. Effective Instruction

A copy of the Survey, along with instructions for administering it on-line are included in this section.

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STAFF Version



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

Title IV, Part A, Section 4126
Community Service Grant (CSG) Contract



THOMAS D. WATKINS, JR.
SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC
INSTRUCTION

Connections: Keeping Kids in School

School Effectiveness Survey - STAFF Version

Instructions for CSG Project Directors

What does the School Effectiveness Survey-Staff Version measure?

This survey consists of 25 items designed to measure perceptions of school climate, leadership and instructional practices among school administrators, teachers, counselors and support staff. The instrument was designed by Dee Lindenberger of SAPE (Strategic Alternatives in Prevention Education); in collaboration with Jim O'Neill, MDE Evaluation Consultant for the CSG project, to provide programmatic needs assessment information for schools involved in the CSG project.

Is this survey required as part of the CSG contract?

The survey is not required, but it is offered by MDE to assist as a *programmatic needs assessment* for the next grant cycle application. In addition, consider these advantages of participating in the survey:

- School climate is a central issue in many districts as part of school/district improvement efforts.
- Results from this survey can be used with those of the student version of the same survey to provide "triangulated" feedback about school climate.
- The report will provide valuable needs assessment information which helps target program efforts as well as secure funding and other support from a variety of sources.
- Data analysis and report generation are provided by MDE at no cost to grant recipients.
- Your individualized report will include benchmarks from aggregated results of all other participating CSG recipients. (Note: Your Individual results will not be identified in reports sent to other grant recipients – they will be combined with results from others to form aggregate benchmarks).
- The same survey will be administered next grant cycle and that report (also provided by MDE) will include year-to-year comparisons.

What is the deadline for completing this survey?

MDE will provide survey results to all participating CSG recipients by March 2, 2004. In order to provide sufficient time to analyze the data and generate reports, all surveys must be completed by **Friday, February 13, 2004.**

How long does it take to complete the survey?

The survey should take no more than 20 to 25 minutes to complete.

Who should complete the survey?

As mentioned earlier, this survey is not required as part of your CSG project. If you decide to participate, the survey should be completed by *all* school administrators, staff, counselors, and support staff from schools participating in the CSG project. The following grantees should survey their CSG school site(s):

- Detroit: Crosman Alternative HS
- Detroit: Trombley Alternative HS
- Flint: Whittier MS
- Hazel Park: Breakfast Club and Advantage
- Lake Orion: Lake Orion HS and Alternative Ed
- Pottersville: NEC HS
- South Redford: Thurston HS

For CSG recipients not listed above (e.g., ISDs, large LEAs), there are numerous school sites that could be surveyed. The decision of which schools to include is at the discretion of the CSG recipient. As you decide, consider including schools that have these characteristics:

- The schools vary in some way from each other demographically (e.g., urban vs. rural; high-income vs. low-income; large vs. small schools; high-risk vs. low-risk population)
- The schools have relatively high levels of suspensions and/or expulsions.
- The schools have “buy-in” regarding school improvement and are seeking “school profile” data to inform those efforts.

How many respondents at each site should complete the survey?

To ensure that grantees can be used as reliable benchmarks for each other, *all* administrators, teachers, counselors, and other support staff at each school should complete the survey.

How do staff complete the survey?

Each staff member will need to use a computer with access to the internet. The survey web site is: <http://home.comcast.net/~joneillphd/MDE-CSG-SchoolEffectiveness-Staff.html>. Once accessed online, the survey includes instructions.

What happens to the survey results? When will they be available to me?

The results will be tabulated for and reported separately to each CSG recipient by Jim O'Neill, the Evaluation Consultant for the CSG project. The report will include results for the grantee's participating school(s) as well as aggregated benchmark data from other CSG recipients. Please note that individual results from your site will not be identified in reports sent to other grant recipients – they will be combined with results from others to form aggregate benchmarks.

The results will be available on or before the CSG Workshop on March 2, 2004, which will include a session on how to utilize this report for the grant application for next grant cycle.

Who should I contact if I have questions or concerns?

Contact Jim O'Neill at: joneill@madonna.edu

Thank You!

STUDENT Version



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

Title IV, Part A, Section 4126
Community Service Grant (CSG) Contract



THOMAS D. WATKINS, JR.
SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC
INSTRUCTION

Connections: Keeping Kids in School

School Effectiveness Survey - STUDENT Version

Instructions for CSG Project Directors

What does the School Effectiveness Survey-Student Version measure?

This survey consists of 18 items designed to measure middle and high school students' perceptions of school climate. The instrument was designed by Dee Lindenberger of SAPE (Strategic Alternatives in Prevention Education); in collaboration with Jim O'Neill, MDE Evaluation Consultant for the CSG project, to provide programmatic needs assessment information for schools involved in the CSG project.

Is this survey required as part of the CSG contract?

The survey is not required, but it is offered by MDE to assist as a *programmatic needs assessment* for the next grant cycle application. In addition, consider these advantages of participating in the survey:

- School climate is a central issue in many districts as part of school/district improvement efforts.
- Results from this survey can be used with those of the student version of the same survey to provide "triangulated" feedback about school climate.
- The report will provide valuable needs assessment information which helps target program efforts as well as secure funding and other support from a variety of sources.
- Data analysis and report generation are provided by MDE at no cost to grant recipients.
- Your individualized report will include benchmarks from aggregated results of all other participating CSG recipients. (Note: Your Individual results will not be identified in reports sent to other grant recipients – they will be combined with results from others to form aggregate benchmarks).
- The same survey will be administered next grant cycle and that report (also provided by MDE) will include year-to-year comparisons.

What is the deadline for completing this survey?

MDE will provide survey results to all participating CSG recipients by March 2, 2004. In order to provide sufficient time to analyze the data and generate reports, all surveys must be completed by **Friday, February 13, 2004.**

How long does it take to complete the survey?

The survey should take no more than 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

Who should complete the survey?

As mentioned earlier, this survey is not required as part of your CSG project. If you decide to participate, the survey should be completed by students from schools participating in the CSG project. The following grantees should include students from their CSG school site(s):

- Detroit: Crosman Alternative HS
- Detroit: Trombley Alternative HS
- Flint: Whittier MS
- Hazel Park: Breakfast Club and Advantage
- Lake Orion: Lake Orion HS and Alternative Ed
- Pottersville: NEC HS
- South Redford: Thurston HS

For CSG recipients not listed above (e.g., ISDs, large LEAs), there are numerous school sites that could be surveyed. The decision of which schools to include is at the discretion of the CSG recipient. As you decide, consider including schools that have these characteristics:

- The schools vary in some way from each other demographically (e.g., urban vs. rural; high-income vs. low-income; large vs. small schools; high-risk vs. low-risk population)
- The schools have relatively high levels of suspensions and/or expulsions.
- The schools have “buy-in” regarding school improvement and are seeking “school profile” data to inform those efforts.

How many students at each site should complete the survey?

To ensure that grantees can be used as reliable benchmarks for each other, all CSG recipients should follow these general guidelines for sampling:

Middle school: Survey grade 6 and 8 only, at least 100 students per grade.

High School: Survey grade 10 and 12 only, at least 100 students per grade.

Alternative School: Survey all students/grades.

The MDE Evaluation Consultant for the CSG project (Jim O'Neill) will be in touch with you sometime during the week of 1/19 to assist with sampling issues, if needed.

How do students complete the survey?

Each student will need to use a computer with access to the internet. The survey web site is: <http://home.comcast.net/~joneillphd/MDE-CSG-SchoolEffectiveness-Student.html>. Once accessed online, the survey includes instructions.

To expedite completion of the survey, it can be administered in groups in a location with multiple computers. If you are concerned about the reading comprehension level of your students, the survey can be read aloud by an adult.

What happens to the survey results? When will they be available to me?

The results will be tabulated for and reported separately to each CSG recipient by Jim O'Neill, the Evaluation Consultant for the CSG project. The report will include results for the grantee's participating school(s) as well as aggregated benchmark data from other CSG recipients. Please note that individual results from your site will not be identified in reports sent to other grant recipients – they will be combined with results from others to form aggregate benchmarks.

The results will be available on or before the CSG Workshop on March 2, 2004, which will include a session on how to utilize this report for the grant application for next grant cycle.

Who should I contact if I have questions or concerns?

Contact Jim O'Neill at: joneill@madonna.edu

Thank You!

Connections Effective Schools Survey: Part II

Quality Leadership

For Teaching, Counseling/Social Work, and Administrative Staff

School Name: _____

I am:

_____ Administrator

_____ Male

_____ Teacher

_____ Female

_____ Counselor/Social Worker

_____ Other

About Quality Leadership

Schools face challenging educational, economic, and social issues. The more effectively school staff members are able to work together as a cohesive team, the more successful they will be in addressing these issues with creativity and resourcefulness—and in providing an optimal learning environment for their students.

Peter Senge (author of The Fifth Discipline and Schools that Learn) conducted extensive research to identify the key characteristics of high functioning organizations. He discovered that the most successful and resilient organizations were those where staff members were able to work together as *learning teams*. These powerful teams had the capacity to overcome obstacles and thrive, even in times of challenging conditions and economic crisis.

And it is more than simply a kind of group togetherness, like a committee. It is a togetherness that is synergistic, honoring the differences we bring to the table—and the chaos as well—one that enhances us both as individuals and as a co-creative team or group.

David Spangler

Senge discovered that learning teams are characterized by five social technologies that he calls “disciplines.” Each of the disciplines is described below, followed by questions that can help you assess how well your staff functions as a team.

Instructions for Completing this Survey

Please read each statement and think about which response you feel best describes the way things are in your school. If the behavior described in the statement rarely if ever happens that way, circle number 1 for “Not Typical.” If it happens that way most of the time, circle number 5 for “Very Typical.”

Not Typical		Somewhat Typical		Very Typical
1	2	3	4	5

Developed by:

Dee Lindenberger: SAPE Consultant, Marquette-Alger RESA

In collaboration with:

Jim O'Neill: Evaluation Consultant, O'Neill Consulting/ Madonna University

SAPE Colleagues (Strategic Alternatives in Prevention Education Association)

Team Learning: *Staff members have the capacity to learn with and from each other. They actively debate and share their ideas, and “listen deeply” to each other’s opinions. Team learning is characterized by collegial relationships and shared leadership.*

	Not Typical	Somewhat Typical	Very Typical	
1. The following is true of our interactions as a staff:				
a. Respectful relationships are a priority.	1	2	3	4 5
b. People really listen to each other’s ideas in discussions.	1	2	3	4 5
c. Irrespective of roles, we work together as a team.	1	2	3	4 5
d. Staff members feel their opinions and ideas are valued—even if they’re “out of the box”!	1	2	3	4 5
e. Staff use effective conflict resolution skills when they have a disagreement with each other.	1	2	3	4 5
f. Staff members have fun together.	1	2	3	4 5
2. Teachers and administrators share leadership roles and responsibilities in their efforts to make our school the best it can be.	1	2	3	4 5
3. There is a clear process in place for decision-making that includes opportunities for participation and input (where appropriate) by key stakeholders:				
a. Staff	1	2	3	4 5
b. Students	1	2	3	4 5
c. Parents	1	2	3	4 5
d. Community	1	2	3	4 5
4. Staff are given adequate time to work together on school initiatives and problem-solving.	1	2	3	4 5
5. When staff members attend a training or conference, they share what they learned with the rest of the staff.	1	2	3	4 5

Systems Thinking: *Staff members engage in the practice of stepping back and looking at the “big picture” of a situation, i.e., its complexities and inter-related dynamics. They try to foresee the long-term impact and the potential for “unintended consequences” that might result from a course of action.*

6. Our staff utilize “systems thinking” (as described above) when planning new initiatives or addressing problems.	1	2	3	4	5
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	Not Typical	Somewhat Typical	Very Typical		
7. Our staff are willing to invest in effective long-term solutions rather than quick “fixes” to problems.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Our staff try to foresee long-term and unintended consequences when planning or solving problems.	1	2	3	4	5

Mental Models: *Staff members have the ability to recognize and work with people’s “mental models” i.e., their underlying paradigms or assumptions about “the way things are or should be.” They are willing to suspend their own beliefs and listen to the perspectives of others with an open mind.*

	Not Typical	Somewhat Typical	Very Typical		
9. Staff actively seek to understand each other’s point of view.	1	2	3	4	5
10. People feel safe to talk about things, including their feelings.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Differences of opinion among our staff generally result in productive problem-solving.	1	2	3	4	5

Shared Vision: *All staff members have a “shared vision” i.e., they share some core beliefs and underlying assumptions regarding teaching and learning that guide their behavior and decision-making. The beliefs are positive and personally meaningful to each staff member.*

	Not Typical	Somewhat Typical	Very Typical		
12. How typical of your staff are the following underlying beliefs? (<i>Note:</i> Before responding to these questions, think about how passionately people hold these beliefs and how they are manifested in your school. Use the space at the end of the survey to add comments.)					
a. All students are capable of learning.	1	2	3	4	5
b. Respect and caring for students are exhibited in all interactions—including disciplinary interventions.	1	2	3	4	5
c. Safety and trust among students and teachers are essential to the learning process.	1	2	3	4	5
d. It’s important that discipline strategies include a “teaching” component to help students learn pro-social behaviors.	1	2	3	4	5
e. We need to utilize a variety of instructional strategies to meet the needs of students’ different learning styles.	1	2	3	4	5
f. Learning can be joyful, interesting, and meaningful!	1	2	3	4	5

	Not Typical	Somewhat Typical	Very Typical	
13. Our school has written policy and procedures that accurately reflect the strategies, services, and programming that are utilized.	1	2	3	4 5
14. Staff feel a strong <i>moral purpose</i> in their roles as educators and youth advocates—they have a personal commitment and passion for teaching.	1	2	3	4 5
15. Staff uphold a common set of behavioral expectations for students by consistently intervening when there are infractions.	1	2	3	4 5
16. Conversations in the staff lounge are respectful (e.g., no sarcasm, put downs, hurtful gossip, or breaking confidentiality).	1	2	3	4 5

Personal Mastery: *All staff members are personally committed to a life-style of inquiry and learning, both personally and professionally.*

	Not Typical	Somewhat Typical	Very Typical	
17. Ongoing staff development/learning is supported.	1	2	3	4 5
18. Staff members are enthusiastic about teaching.	1	2	3	4 5
19. Staff members actively seek opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills.	1	2	3	4 5
20. Staff contributions and successes are acknowledged and celebrated.	1	2	3	4 5
21. Please indicate how many hours of professional development you participated in last year:				
_____ 0 days		_____ 3 - 4 days		
_____ Less than 1 day		_____ 5 - 6 days		
_____ 1 - 2 days		_____ More than 6 days (How many?)		

In summary, think about how you would describe the overall manner in which your staff members and administration relate and work together as a team.

The most powerful indicator of student achievement is the quality of relationships among the staff.
Harvard Principal's Center

22. Circle the letter of the metaphor that most closely describes the way in which your school staff most often tends to work together on projects and school initiatives:
- a. Carousel: *We go round and round with things.*
 - b. Shooting Gallery: *People, rather than problems, get targeted.*
 - c. Swamp Thing: *We get pretty bogged down.*
 - d. Turtle: *Things move along, but progress is pretty slow.*
 - e. Bumper Cars: *Everybody's going, but not in the same direction.*
 - f. Starship: *We set high goals and really take off with our plans. We are capable of finding our way through uncharted territory, solving problems we encounter along the way and bringing back new knowledge.*

Is there anything important that you would like to share about leadership in your school? If yes, please describe briefly:

Connections Effective Schools Survey: Part I

School Climate

For Middle and High School Students and Staff

School Name: _____

_____ **I am a Student:** _____ Grade Level

_____ Male

_____ Female

_____ **I am a School Staff Member:** _____ Administrator

_____ Male

_____ Female

_____ Teacher

_____ Counselor

_____ Support Staff

About School Climate

“School Climate” refers to how it “feels” to be a student or staff member in the school.

“Schools with positive climates are places where people care, respect and trust one another; and where the school, as an institution, cares for, respects, and trusts people. In such a school, people feel a high sense of pride and ownership that comes from each individual having a role in making the school a better place.”

Eugene Howard

Everyone has a number of *basic human needs*. These are needs that we are biologically hard-wired to fulfill. The more effectively a school can provide a climate that will help its students meet those needs in a positive way, the more it can help its students be successful, both academically and in their lives. The questions in this survey are grouped according to the basic need areas identified by Karen Pittman (Executive Director of the Forum for Youth Investment) in her research on positive youth development.

This survey gives you an opportunity to express your opinions about some aspects of the “climate” in your school. This survey includes a number of statements that will provide valuable information for future planning. Your responses are confidential. The results of this survey will be compiled into group responses, with no way to identify an individual’s responses. The surveys are numbered to help us with data tracking. No connection will be made or attempted between your responses and your identity. We will protect your confidentiality.

Instructions for Completing this Survey

Please read each statement and think about which response you feel best describes the way things are in your school. If the behavior described in the statement rarely if ever happens that way, circle number “1” for “Not Typical.” If it happens that way most of the time, circle number “5” for “Very Typical.”

Not Typical		Somewhat Typical		Very Typical
1	2	3	4	5

Developed by:

In collaboration with:

Dee Lindenberger: SAPE Consultant, Marquette-Alger RESA

Paul White: Director of Academic Resource Center, Lakeland College, Wisconsin

Jim O’Neill: Evaluation Consultant, O’Neill Consulting/ Madonna University

SAPE Colleagues (Strategic Alternatives in Prevention Education Association)

Safety and Structure: *Youth need to have a sense of personal safety and protection—both physically and emotionally.*

	Not Typical		Somewhat Typical		Very Typical
1. The overall school atmosphere feels:					
a) Safe	1		2	3	4 5
b) Caring	1		2	3	4 5
2. When school staff have a conflict or behavioral problem with a student, they are:					
a) Calm	1		2	3	4 5
b) Respectful	1		2	3	4 5
3. Students resolve their disputes:					
a) Respectfully	1		2	3	4 5
b) Peacefully	1		2	3	4 5
4. School staff use discipline strategies that promote positive change when there is a behavior problem with a student.	1		2	3	4 5
5. The present discipline system seems fair (not too harsh or too lenient).	1		2	3	4 5
6. Standards for student behavior are clearly communicated to:					
a) Students	1		2	3	4 5
b) Parents	1		2	3	4 5
c) Staff	1		2	3	4 5
7. When the disciplinary code is violated, consequences are enforced consistently for all students.	1		2	3	4 5
8. School staff members help students take responsibility for their behavior.	1		2	3	4 5
9. Adults help make sure that students don't get bullied or harassed.	1		2	3	4 5
10. Students having problems in the following areas are quickly given support services:					
a) Academic problems	1		2	3	4 5
b) Emotional or behavioral problems (for example, chemical use, aggression, depression, stress)	1		2	3	4 5

Belonging and Group Membership: *Youth need to feel they are valued members of a group; they have a sense of belonging in the school.*

	Not Typical	Somewhat Typical	Very Typical		
11. Student concerns are taken seriously by school staff.	1	2	3	4	5
12. School is a place where students feel they fit in and “belong.”	1	2	3	4	5
13. There are opportunities for all students who want to participate in extra-curricular/leadership activities.	1	2	3	4	5

Self-Worth and Ability to Contribute: *Youth need to have a sense of their worth and have opportunities to make meaningful contributions—with their peers, adults, and in their school.*

	Not Typical	Somewhat Typical	Very Typical		
14. Staff believe all students can be successful in school.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Students are acknowledged for their success and contributions in many different arenas (for example, academic, service/helping, leadership, talent).	1	2	3	4	5
16. School staff listen to student ideas and suggestions.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Students have opportunities to help others (for example, mentoring, tutoring, community service, peer helping, service learning, mediation) in their:					
a) School	1	2	3	4	5
b) Community	1	2	3	4	5

Independence and Control: *Youth need to feel they can make some decisions and have some control over their lives.*

	Not Typical	Somewhat Typical	Very Typical		
18. Students participate in making school an inviting place to be (for example, planning displays, painting murals, contributing art work, planting gardens).	1	2	3	4	5
19. Students are given choices regarding learning activities (for example, choice of topic or choice between writing a paper and doing a project, working alone or in a group).	1	2	3	4	5
20. Students have opportunities to participate in decisions about school issues that affect them (for example, discipline policy, extra-curricular activities, leadership).	1	2	3	4	5

Closeness and Good Relationships: *Youth need to experience closeness to other people—relationships that are based upon respect, caring, honesty, and trust.*

	Not Typical	Somewhat Typical	Very Typical	
21. All students are treated with <i>respect</i> by:				
a) Peers	1	2	3	4 5
b) Staff	1	2	3	4 5
22. School staff encourage respect for diversity of all kinds.	1	2	3	4 5
23. Students and staff spend time together outside of academic time in the classrooms (for example, informal activities or conversations, extra-curricular activities).	1	2	3	4 5
24. Students and staff enjoy each other's company.	1	2	3	4 5
25. Every student has at least one adult in school with whom he /she has a "special connection"—a person that student would feel comfortable talking to about problems or asking for help.	1	2	3	4 5

Competency and Mastery: *Youth need to develop attitudes, behaviors, and skills in a number of core areas in order to be successful as adults (including social and coping skills as well as academic abilities).*

	Not Typical	Somewhat Typical	Very Typical	
26. Students are taught and encouraged to use effective social, conflict resolution, and coping skills including:				
a) Respecting diversity (race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, religion, special needs)	1	2	3	4 5
b) Behaving according to a core set of ethics (character education)	1	2	3	4 5
c) Managing anger	1	2	3	4 5
d) Communicating effectively	1	2	3	4 5
e) Managing stress	1	2	3	4 5
f) Solving personal problems	1	2	3	4 5
g) Resolving conflicts with others	1	2	3	4 5
27. Because teachers know that students learn in different ways, they use lots of different strategies (including active student participation) when they teach that help make learning interesting and fun.	1	2	3	4 5
28. Teachers and administrators show that they have high expectations that <i>all</i> students can be successful learners by the way they talk and act with students.	1	2	3	4 5

Not Typical Somewhat Typical Very Typical

29. When students are having trouble with a subject, staff are quick to find a way to help them (for example, spending extra time with them, arranging for tutoring, etc.).

1 2 3 4 5

Conclusion: Please respond to the following open ended questions.

30. Please look back over the questions in this survey and select up to five that you feel need the most improvement in your school. Record the number of each question below and write any comments you have about your choices in the space below:

31. Did we miss something you feel is important that would help improve your school's climate?

32. Is there something especially positive about your school climate you would like to note?

33. Is there anything that has recently happened in your school or community that might be affecting your responses in this survey regarding school climate (for example, a death or other traumatic event, cuts in programs or services, contract changes in school staff)? If yes, please explain.

If you are a student, please respond to the following final questions.

34. Which best describes your current status regarding school suspension?

_____ I have never been suspended at this school.
 _____ I have been suspended at this school, but not currently.
 _____ I am currently serving an in-school suspension.
 _____ I am currently serving a suspension at another school location.

35. Which best describes your current status regarding school expulsion?

_____ I have never been expelled from school.
 _____ I have been expelled from school, but not currently.
 _____ I am currently expelled and attending a program at another school.

Connections Effective Schools Survey: Part III

Effective Instruction

For Teaching Staff

School Name: _____

I am:

_____ Male

_____ Female

About Effective Instruction:

Much has been learned in the past ten years about effective pedagogy and the neuroscience of learning. Through recent technology and research we have a clearer picture of how the brain takes in, encodes, and retrieves information—about things that impede learning and things that stimulate learning. Neuroscience-based learning (i.e., brain-based learning or accelerated learning) is a body of research that can help educators create learning environments that match how our body and brain learn, most naturally. Irrespective of subject matter taught, the use of these effective instructional strategies can help us work *with* the grain of our students' biology instead of *against* it, thus increasing learning while minimizing the behavioral problems that accompany disconnected learners.

Increasing numbers of educators are being trained in brain-based teaching strategies and are discovering their powerful impact as educational tools. There are also educators who have intuitively been drawn to that style of teaching, and have been using these strategies for years. The following questions are intended to help you assess *your* level of use of these research-based strategies that can increase bonding to school, improve behavior, and enhance learning across content areas.

Instructions for Completing this Survey

Please read each statement and think about which response you feel best describes the way you do things in *your classroom*. If the behavior described in the statement rarely if ever happens that way, circle number 1 for “Not Typical.” If it happens that way most of the time, circle number 5 for “Very Typical.”

Not Typical		Somewhat Typical		Very Typical
1	2	3	4	5

Developed by:

In collaboration with:

Dee Lindenberger: SAPE Consultant, Marquette-Alger RESA

Cristal McGill: Impact Teaching, Inc., Consultant/Trainer

Jim O'Neill: Evaluation Consultant, O'Neill Consulting/ Madonna University

SAPE Colleagues (Strategic Alternatives in Prevention Education Association)

	Not Typical	Somewhat Typical	Very Typical		
1. How typical is the use of the following strategies in your classroom?					
a. Music (i.e., use of music as a classroom management tool and to regulate student affect)	1	2	3	4	5
b. Movement (i.e., kinesthetic activities and other opportunities to stand up and move around)	1	2	3	4	5
c. Projects with real life relevance	1	2	3	4	5
d. Experiential activities / simulations	1	2	3	4	5
e. Role plays or dramatizations	1	2	3	4	5
f. Small group discussions among students	1	2	3	4	5
g. Cooperative learning opportunities (i.e., positive inter-dependent group learning assignments that include interpersonal/group skills and have a sense of individual and group accountability—“sink or swim together”)	1	2	3	4	5
h. Graphic representations (i.e., having students mentally organize and “manipulate” content into mind maps, drawings, physical models, webs, or charts, kinesthetic representations)	1	2	3	4	5
i. Art (i.e., activities to stimulate expression and enhance memory)	1	2	3	4	5
j. Stories and metaphors	1	2	3	4	5
k. Reciprocal teaching (i.e., peer-to-peer presentations or interactions to check for understanding and solidify learning)	1	2	3	4	5
l. Social interactions (i.e., participating in mutually enjoyable activities that build relationships and a sense of community)	1	2	3	4	5
2. Students are encouraged to make mental comparisons by asking them to identify similarities and differences with content.	1	2	3	4	5
3. The purpose of learning specific content is clearly conveyed to students in order to create “buy in.”	1	2	3	4	5
4. Instructional feedback to students is “corrective” rather than “punitive” in spirit.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Students are given opportunities to give their own feedback.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Problem solving activities and situations are used where students are given opportunities to explain their hypothesis and conclusions.	1	2	3	4	5

	Not Typical	Somewhat Typical	Very Typical	
7. “Higher level” questions are utilized to deepen student learning (i.e., questions that promote critical thinking, such as asking students to analyze errors or perspectives).	1	2	3	4 5
8. Advance organizers are used to provide a “pre-exposure” to new content and to focus attention on key points.	1	2	3	4 5
9. Students are given opportunities to respond to questions designed to stimulate reflection and deepen learning following experiential activities (e.g. simulations, role plays, service activities in and outside of the school).	1	2	3	4 5
10. Unstructured time (before, after, and in between classes) is used as an opportunity to make positive connections with students (e.g., welcoming them, greeting them by name, or otherwise showing an interest in them).	1	2	3	4 5
11. Please indicate how many days of professional development regarding effective instructional strategies you participated in last year:				
_____ 0 days				_____ 3 - 4 days
_____ Less than 1 day				_____ 5 - 6 days
_____ 1 - 2 days				_____ More than 6 days (How many?)

Comments:



School Improvement Research Series (SIRS)

Research You Can Use

Topical Synthesis #1

Effective Schooling Practices and At-Risk Youth: What the Research Shows

Greg Druian and Jocelyn A. Butler

WHAT IS THE QUESTION?

There is today a growing consensus that the characteristics of effective schools can be identified and described. An emerging question is "How widely can these characteristics be applied?" Recent studies, for instance, cite the efficacy of effective schooling practices with American Indian programs and in Title I programs.

The question of effective, high-quality education means many things to many people--some would like our young people to be better educated in the "basic skills"; others are concerned that schools prepare "technologically literate" youth; and still others want schools to be places where kids learn discipline, citizenship and positive democratic values. While all of these concerns are serious, an even deeper and more pervasive concern is whether we as a nation are going to fulfill the promise that all young people will receive a quality education.

For many researchers, the problem of who will receive an education is as important as the problem of how to bring about excellence in education. Some disturbing findings have surfaced:

- Most experts agree that some 30 percent of youth in school now will drop out prior to graduating.
- There does not at this time appear to be a good definition or even description of who these

- youth are. (Mann)
- Based on what is known about the dropout prone, there is every indication that their numbers will increase in coming years.
 - Society will need to bear profound economic costs for failing to educate these young persons. (Levin)

Given, however, that we know something about what makes schools effective, it seems worthwhile to ask the question about whether the techniques, processes and procedures which arguably work in schools will also get results with at-risk youth in schools.

The question is urgent for two reasons First, there is the obvious likelihood that the effective schools research will yield knowledge which can be applied in providing quality education to at-risk students. Second, it is equally important to point out that some researchers sound the warning that the effective schools movement itself could constitute a threat to education for at-risk youth if it is not accompanied with supports necessary to accommodate the special needs of those likely to be dropouts (Hamilton 1986; McDill, Natriello and Pallas 1985a, 1985b, 1986; Levin 1986).

Levin (p. 13) puts the matter quite bluntly:

The unique needs of the educationally disadvantaged cannot be fully or effectively addressed by reforms of a general nature, such as increasing course requirements, raising teacher salaries, or increasing the amount of instructional time. While these reforms may be desirable on their own merits, they should not be viewed as a substitute for direct and comprehensive strategies to solve the problems of the disadvantaged. In the absence of specific remedial programs for the disadvantaged, the general reforms may overwhelm the abilities of ever larger numbers of them to meet the requirements for high school completion.

The intention of this paper is to take a first step towards answering the question whether there is a "fit" between techniques shown to be effective with at-risk youth and the conclusions reached by the effective schools researchers. This line of questioning will yield one or two possible answers. First, it is possible that what works for at-risk youth is inconsistent with effective schools findings: there may be a population of youth requiring a "separate" kind of educational experience. The second possibility is that there is substantial overlap between what works with at-risk youth and what works in effective schools: the effective schools research may provide a useful framework for working with students who might otherwise receive poor or no education.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

In recent years, substantial effort has been made to identify characteristics which distinguish effective schools. effective schools are those in which all students master priority objectives. This definition is derived from an extensive review and synthesis of the effective schools research (NWREL 1984), which included examination of research in six areas: school effects, teacher effects, instructional leadership, curriculum alignment, program coupling and educational change and implementation. through the synthesis of this research, major findings were identified about what takes place in classrooms, school buildings and districts that contributes to high levels of student performance.

For the purposes of this paper, the intent is not to provide an exhaustive review of this literature but to indicate key characteristics of effective schools which can be compared with practices that work with at-risk youth. this rich resource base can be organized into three major areas, as follow:

LEADERSHIP: The role of the building principal is to focus the whole school on instruction and use this focus as a means of establishing and acting upon priorities in the school. The principal and all others in the school know the school is a place for learning.

CLIMATE: All staff and all students share the expectation that all students can learn. Effective schools exhibit equity in terms of learning. Learning takes place in a safe, orderly environment, and students are expected to behave according to established, fairly executed rules of conduct.

CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION AND MANAGEMENT: All teachers are highly skilled in and use a variety of instructional methods and techniques. there are clear instructional objectives, activities are tied to objectives, and there is frequent monitoring and evaluation of student progress toward those objectives.

CONDITIONS ASSOCIATED WITH AT-RISK STUDENTS

What conditions predict whether a student will be at risk? What conditions predict the likelihood of a student dropping out of school before graduation? What conditions predict whether a student will go through high school having a frustrating and unrewarding time-- regardless of actual graduation?

Researchers have found that it is possible to identify potential dropouts early--as early as elementary school (McDill, Natriello and Pallas 1986). Hodgkinson (p. 12) found in his research a widely held view that "we intervene too late in the course of a student's development, that certain parts of the profile of a dropout-prone student may be visible as early as the third grade."

At the same time, there are a great variety of conditions associated with being at risk. Researchers who have investigated characteristics correlated with a high likelihood of dropping out mention demographic, socioeconomic and institutional characteristics such as:

- Living in high-growth states
- Living in unstable school districts
- Being a member of a low-income family
- Having low academic skills (though not necessarily low intelligence)
- Having parents who are not high school graduates
- Speaking English as a second language
- Being single-parent children
- Having negative self-perceptions; being bored or alienated; having low self-esteem
- Pursuing alternatives: males tend to seek paid work as an alternative; females may leave to have children or get married

One very important aspect of the problem is that it is clear that populations with these characteristics are growing--so that if there is a correlation between population characteristics and being at risk, the situation will in all likelihood worsen.

What is the situation? While the issue with at-risk youth is frequently portrayed as a dropping out issue, it seems that the fact of leaving school prior to graduation is only a symptom. For example, there is evidence that in many schools a "push-out" syndrome exists. Fine (1986) documents how some schools passively allow students to drop out by withholding any effort to retain them or even to find out what the problem is.

Furthermore, it is very easy to confuse "stopping out" (leaving school for another activity) with "dropping out." And finally, who is to say whether dropping out of a poorly supported and/or inadequately staffed school may not leave the student better off in the long run particularly if there are alternatives available. The measure of our dealing adequately with the needs of at-risk youth should not, probably, be numbers of dropouts, but should instead be the kinds of instruction and amounts of learning that take place in the school.

The issue is the kind and quality of learning experienced by the student while in school. When the issue is defined in terms of the experience, it is an issue upon which the school can act. It is therefore interesting to note results of studies of the actual determinants of dropping out.

Data from the "High School and Beyond" study have been carefully analyzed to determine whether there are characteristics which effectively predict whether a youth will become a dropout. Wehlage and Rutter (1986) note that "the most powerful determinants (according to HS&B data) of dropping out are low expectations and low grades combined with disciplinary problems, truancy being the most common offense" (p. 4). They add that while the school can't do much about the socioeconomic factors that are associated with being at risk, the things found to be determinants are things that are very much under the school's control.

These findings are supported by Rock and his colleagues (AASA 1985), who analyzed the same data and found that factors which helped students succeed "have a similar impact on achievement gains for all groups of students, whether white or black, male or female, or enrolled in a public or Catholic school" (p. 63). In other words, school effects are school effects and they have impact on all pupils equally and without regard to socioeconomic conditions.

Rutter, et al. (1979) reached similar conclusions in their study of the effects of schools in London, finding that "children were more likely to show good behavior and good scholastic attainments if they attended some schools than if they attended others" (pp. 177-178). This conclusion was reached after controlling for family background and personal characteristics. In one final study worth mentioning, Sexton (1985) found that students transferring from a school with a high dropout rate to another with a lower dropout rate reflected the lower rate in the extent to which they actually left school.

It is probably important to distinguish between social characteristics of at-risk youth and the conditions in schools which inhibit or fail to bring about learning. It is becoming increasingly clear that at-risk youth are those who attend certain types of schools-- specifically schools with little support, which promote low expectations and which have little or no curriculum focus.

SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES FOR AT-RISK STUDENTS

The title of this section should probably include the phrase "and how do we know?" Hodgkinson

(1985), for instance, believes that a great deal is being done, but it is not widely shared and is not well publicized. He asserts that "many localities, however, have developed excellent drop-out prevention programs" and there is a "major need to coordinate and share information on what works and why." He notes that successful programs "combine intensive, individualized training in the basic skills with work-related projects" and finds that "when the relation between education and work becomes clear, most of these potential drop-outs can be motivated to stay in school and perform at a higher level" (p. 12).

Green and Baker (1986) report on a literature search and on their questionnaire survey of initiatives for high-risk youth in the Pacific Northwest states. They find that much, indeed, seems to be underway, but that practitioners do not share a common taxonomy or framework for discussing and sharing what they are doing.

Hamilton (1986), reviewing the ERIC index, found "a surprisingly small number of reports and only a few (with) both program descriptions and data indicating program effectiveness." He was, however, able to find that successful programs seemed to exhibit these characteristics (p. 410):

- Dropouts are separated from other students
- The programs have strong vocational components
- Out-of-classroom learning is utilized
- Programs tend to be intensive--small, individualized with low student-teacher ratios--and tend to offer more counseling than the regular school curriculum.

In the review undertaken for this paper, findings are grouped into three categories: large, federally funded programmatic efforts; pull-out programs; and classroom-based studies.

FEDERALLY FUNDED STUDIES

In one of the greatest evaluation efforts ever undertaken in support of a social experiment, a huge "knowledge development" component was made part of the Labor Department's Youth Employment Demonstration Projects Act (YEDPA) in the late 1970s and early 1980s. An enormous amount of information was generated by projects funded under this program. In general, it can be said that the research supported the hypothesis that paid work experience tended to help enable low-income youth to remain in school longer. While the school curriculum often benefited from additional resources, especially resources related to career skills, these were normally not permanent additions and were not always available to all students. Three features of these efforts are notable: first, participants were generally required to develop a "career plan"; second, there was a conscious effort to build the program around competencies to be attained by participants; and third, in many of the programs, participants were provided with services, where possible, which would enable them to stay a part of the program.

Experienced-Based Career Education (EBCE) is a programmatic effort that differs from some others in that, in many cases, it attempts to be tightly interwoven into the school curriculum instead of added to it. Extensive evaluation of EBCE found that students participating in it performed at least as well (or no worse) on standardized measures of academic learning than nonparticipants.

PULL-OUT PROGRAMS

Wehlage (1983) analyzes several programs that successfully involve marginal students in school work and try to keep them in school. His analysis cuts across a breadth of school contexts, and he finds that alienation from the school, daily reinforced by teachers and administrators, is one of the most important threats to the retention of at-risk youth. He asks, "When otherwise normal adolescents who have sufficient intelligence to succeed in school. . . become alienated and reject the school, should not educators attempt to find ways to respond constructively to this significant portion of their clientele?" (p. 16)

Wehlage's answer is that educators unequivocally can make a difference--that teachers and administrators can develop ways to retain at-risk youth and involve them in learning. He criticizes programs which stress only "basic skills" or "vocational education" or "career education" alone as being too narrow in focus and thus of limited value. He argues that schools must provide young people with experiences of success in order to counteract the messages of failure he finds these young people are constantly receiving. He argues further that we reinforce the message of failure by not expecting enough from the marginal student--we tend to place these students in "slow" classes and to deny them access to challenging experiences. Indeed, the failure to develop appropriately challenging experiences for these students is one of Wehlage's major criticisms of public schools. He would have schools stress the development of abstract thinking (in the Piagetian sense) and the development of social skills.

In the six effective programs which he outlines, he finds that there are several characteristics of effective programs. First, there is the group of **ADMINISTRATIVE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS** common among successful programs. Small size allows attention to individual needs of students through frequent face-to-face interactions and monitoring. Program autonomy allows teachers the flexibility to respond quickly. Decision making authority gives teachers a sense of empowerment, which in turn heightens their commitment to the program.

Next, characteristics grouped under **TEACHER CULTURE** refer to the sense of professional accountability for program success and the optimism/confidence teachers have in the program, the extended role of the teacher in dealing with the "whole student" which creates in students a sense that they are cared for, and the sense of collegiality which binds together the team of teachers working in the program.

A third set of characteristics is called **STUDENT CULTURE**. As Wehlage says, "The single most valued characteristic of the programs is the 'family atmosphere'" (p. 36). Wehlage reports that successful programs do not suppress criticism but instead provide a positive and constructive atmosphere in which criticism can occur. Another characteristic of student culture is cooperative learning, where help may be obtained from other students or teachers and where team learning takes place.

Wehlage finds that the most important curricular characteristics of effective programs for at-risk students is the experiential curriculum. He makes the very important point that a fundamental difference between experiential programs and work/vocational programs is that the latter tend to focus on monetary rewards and to offer less opportunity for students to take challenging roles and opportunities. Experiential activities, on the other hand, offer possibilities for maximizing adolescent development that are important. Wehlage says, "We believe there is sufficient evidence about the effects of experiential education (that meet the criteria below) to argue for it as an **ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF AND PROGRAM FOR MARGINAL STUDENTS**" (author's emphasis).

The criteria for experiential education are that the program:

- Should offer "optimal challenge with manageable conflict"
- Should provide a young person an opportunity to exercise initiative and responsibility
- Should provide the young person with a task that has integrity (i.e., is not "make-work") and thus reinforces the person's sense of dignity
- Should provide the young person with a "sense of competence and success"
- Must engage the student in reflection about his/her experiences (pp. 38-40).

CLASSROOM-BASED STUDIES

A third kind of study seeks to identify whether there are schools successfully working with dropout-prone students and if so, to describe the techniques they use. Edmonds (1979) is unequivocal in his assertion that "all children are eminently educable and that the behavior of the school is critical in determining the quality of that education." Both in his own research on schools serving the urban poor and in his review of similar research undertaken by others, he finds that there are indeed effective schools which demonstrate these characteristics:

- Strong administrative leadership
- A climate of expectation in which "no children are permitted to fall below minimum but efficacious levels of achievement"
- An orderly, but not rigid, atmosphere that is "conducive to the instructional business at hand"
- An attitude which makes it clear that "pupil acquisition of the basic skills takes precedence over all other school activities"
- The ability to divert resources "from other business in furtherance of the fundamental objectives" when necessary
- Means for frequent monitoring of pupil progress, specifically, means "by which the principal and the teachers remain constantly aware of pupil progress in relationship to instructional objectives."

A somewhat different tack is taken by McDill, Natriello and Pallas (1986), who have synthesized an extensive number of research studies and evaluation efforts in an attempt to examine the potential consequences of tougher school standards on students who are at risk of dropping out. Their work is included in this section because they also focus on classroom-based research. They examine first the possible positive consequences and then the possible negative consequences.

The nub of the question is whether increased standards will make it even harder for at-risk student to succeed in school. On the positive side, when students are confronted with challenging standards, they are more likely to pay attention in class and spend time on homework. In the studies they cite, class cutting is notably higher in classes which put a low demand on students than in classes with higher demands. These findings hold for students of all abilities. In general McDill et al. conclude that "results in several different lines of research provide hope that raising standards will lead students to work somewhat harder, at least when standards are originally quite low, and that greater student effort will lead to somewhat higher student achievement" (p. 149).

Nevertheless, there must come a point where expectations are too high for some students to succeed without additional assistance of some kind. The potential negative effects are 1) that

greater academic stratification will occur and student will have fewer choices available to them; and 2) more demanding time requirements on the part of schools will conflict with other demands on students.

These researchers focus on "alterable characteristics in schools" to minimize the risk of unwanted effects. They note that size of the school is one of the most important factors associated with having fewer disorders, higher achievement, higher levels of student participation and more feelings of satisfaction with school (p. 157).

Other factors include an INDIVIDUALIZED CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH; CLIMATE, which is concerned with matters of governance (the importance of clear rules consistently enforced); the system of academic REWARDS (they note that researchers "have found it useful to employ a variety of alternative, detailed reward systems such as learning contracts, token economies and grading systems that base evaluation on individual effort and progress" [p. 159]; and NORMATIVE EMPHASIS ON ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE. Finally, at the classroom level, these researchers assert that a CLEAR ORIENTATION TO WORK AND LEARNING in the classroom is essential before approaches such as individualized instruction can succeed. they also assert that without the orientation to learning, even the best teachers will be unlikely to succeed in positively affecting the dropout prone.

COMMONALITIES

The primary characteristic of successful programs for at-risk youth seems to be a STRONG, EVEN INTENSE, LEVEL OF COMMITMENT on the part of the instructional staff. As with effective schools, where the principal is active in the day-to-day operation of the instructional program, the leader takes a strong interest in the operation of the program; traditional roles and role relationships are not as important as taking the proper action to achieve school/program goals. In both cases, there is a clear belief that students will succeed.

Evaluation of programs consistently mentions STRONG LEADERSHIP as one of the factors contributing most to their success. Of course it may well be that leadership emerges more easily in the context of a program or, more likely perhaps, that without strong leadership , there wouldn't have been a program in the first place. The point seems to be, however, that it is the quality of the leadership rather than the fact of the program, that makes for success. The policy consequences might well be consideration of ways of developing leadership instead of ways of developing the programs.

Finally, it should be noted that one of the strongest criticisms of schools made by dropouts is that the discipline is unfair and arbitrary. Successful programs that serve dropouts are characterized as having fair--though sometimes tough--programs of discipline. The programs clarify what offenses are and what the punishment is.

Differences between techniques used to serve at-risk youth and techniques in effective schools have to do with the types of goals which are pursued and not the manner in which they are pursued. At the secondary level, the most important characteristic of programs serving at-risk youth is indeed that they are programs; the ones reviewed in this paper are pull-out programs. It may well be that the only way in which certain youth in certain schools can be reached at all is to take them completely out of the school context and build a program minus the added burden of overcoming the residue of bad feelings toward s the school they may have built up.

Practitioners who work with at-risk youth, however, might consider whether there is more instructional value in shaping experiences in which at-risk pupils interact with other pupils. For instance, Ward (1986) notes that cooperative learning groups (small groups of students with diverse backgrounds working on common tasks) "produce significant gains in academic achievement for minority students" (in desegregated classrooms) (p.6). The fact of a pull-out program seems to limit what can be achieved with grouping.

The fact that at-risk youth are served by programs rather than through an effort on the part of the school to meet the needs of these youth has another consequence. The curriculum, even in successful programs, tends to be limited and to track students into fairly narrow channels. Although it would be hard to pinpoint, the assumption seems to be made that at-risk students need a career-oriented education focused generally on nonprofessional occupations. The point is not whether this is appropriate or not for all or even any of these students, but rather that the students do not seem to have a choice. Indeed, the question of limited curriculum never seems to arise, perhaps because more fundamental needs are being met.

On the other hand, many successful programs for at-risk youth make use of their autonomy to develop very rich curricular offerings, particularly in the area of experiential learning. The benefits of this type of learning may well be something that deserves investigation by effective schools researchers. Levin calls attention to peer teaching and cooperative learning as "two approaches that seem to work particularly well for disadvantaged students" (p. 15).

Another consequence of the fact that the needs of at-risk youth are served primarily by programs is that it may be difficult to decide where the program stops. Indeed the temptation is to develop a comprehensive program, one which owing to the special needs of the population to be served, may require components which go far beyond the capacity of the school itself to implement or be responsible for. For instance, Levin (p. 13) asserts that the major components of a strategy to solve the problems of disadvantaged students would have to include:

- Providing enriched preschool experiences
- Improving the effectiveness of the home as a learning environment
- Improving the effectiveness of the school for addressing the needs of the disadvantaged
- Assisting those from linguistically different backgrounds to acquire skills in standard English.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN RESEARCH ON AT-RISK YOUTH AND EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

An examination of both sets of research suggests that there may be value in applying effective schooling practices to at-risk youth. Successful programs for at-risk youth. Successful programs for at-risk youth in fact reflect the use of effective practice. Within the parameters of the programs, for example, there is strong leadership to support and guide instructional priorities. All students must meet clear expectations for academic performance and behavior, and there is frequent monitoring of student progress and support for success.

In terms of at-risk students as part of the general student population, there are other factors from the effective schooling research which may be valuable (Figure 1):

Figure 1

AT-RISK RESEARCH

- Separate low expectations
- Need for success
- Lack of consistent discipline
- No teacher involvement, accountability
- Lack of attention to needs of individual
- Lack of engagement in learning

EFFECTIVE SCHOOLING RESEARCH

- High expectations for all
- Clear, achievable goals
- Clear rules for behavior, fairly enforced
- Effective instruction and classroom management
- Careful monitoring of student progress
- Emphasis that school is place for learning

-
- At-risk youth are often channeled to programs with special, reduced expectations for performance, especially academic performance. The effective schools research strongly supports that schools establish and maintain high expectations and standards for all students and focus on helping them all meet those expectations.
 - At-risk youth exhibit a lack of and strong need for success. With clear goals and objectives recommended by the effective schools research, at-risk youth can move toward and achieve measurable success in school.
 - Lack of consistency in discipline often contributes to the problems of at-risk youth who may be, in effect, penalized for being at risk. The effective schools research supports the establishment and maintenance of clear rules for behavior of all students, with behavior measured against the standards, not against previous behavior or behaviors of other students, and with rules enforced fairly and equitably for all.
 - A problem in schools with high at-risk populations is the decline of teacher involvement and/or accountability for the performance of these students. The use of effective classroom instruction and management techniques, with emphasis on teacher responsibility and expectation that all students can and will learn, may counteract this teacher withdrawal.
 - There is often a lack of attention to the needs of individual at-risk students. Effective schooling research supports the careful monitoring of all students' progress with interventions to improve student learning.
 - At-risk youth are often characterized by a lack of engagement in learning. The effective schools research emphasizes holding the expectation that all students are involved in their own learning and that all students understand and respect the fact that school is a place dedicated to learning.

The accumulated knowledge of alternative programs for at-risk young people seems to support substantially the findings and recommendations of the effective schools researchers. Where the differences lie seem principally to concern curriculum goals or purposes of education.

Nonetheless, given the set of goals professed by each "side," the means of attaining them show great congruence. The conclusion to which this analysis seems to point can be summed up in the words of Ronald Edmonds (1979, p. 23):

(a) We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us; (b) We already know more than we need to do that; and (c) Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far.

ANNOTATED SOURCE LIST

Batsche, Catherine, et al. INDICATORS OF EFFECTIVE PROGRAMMING FOR SCHOOL-TO-WORK TRANSITION SKILLS AMONG DROPOUTS. Normal, IL: Illinois State University, June 1984. (ED 246 235)

The writers examine vocational programs to find out what works to increase retention of high school dropouts. The most interesting finding in this study is that students rated two factors very highly--support from other students and financial aid--which were rated low by administrators.

Edmonds, Ronald. "Effective Schools for the Urban Poor." EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP, 15-24, October 1979.

Fine, Michelle. "Why Urban Adolescents Drop Into and Out of Public High School." TEACHERS COLLEGE RECORD, 393-409, Spring 1986.

Good, Thomas L. and Jere E. Brophy. LOOKING IN CLASSROOMS. New York: Harper and Row, 1984.

Chapter 4, "Teacher Expectations," presents persuasive evidence of the influence of a teacher's expectations on pupil performance; these effects occur regardless of the pupil's background or SES.

Green, Karen Reed and Baker, Andrea. PROMISING PRACTICES FOR HIGH RISK YOUTH IN THE NORTHWEST REGION: INITIAL SEARCH. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, June 1986.

The authors review national studies as well as studies and programs from the Northwest Region. They find that while most of what is considered "effective" or "promising" is a matter of expert testimony, as opposed to carefully designed research, common threads of successful programs usually involve staffing, methodology, curriculum and administrative support.

Hamilton, Stephen F. "Raising Standards and Reducing the Dropout Rate." In "School Dropouts: Patterns and Policies," TEACHERS COLLEGE RECORD, 410-429, Spring 1986.

This careful and sensitive article explores issues related to the effect that raising

standards could have on dropout rates in secondary schools. He finds promise in recent research which suggests that the classroom might not be the best environment for learning.

Hodgkinson, Harold L. ALL ONE SYSTEM: DEMOGRAPHICS OF EDUCATION, KINDERGARTEN THROUGH GRADUATE SCHOOL Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership, Inc., 1985.

A somewhat comprehensive exposition of his theories about how demographic changes will affect the continuum of education; he argues very persuasively that demographic trends will force the educational system to confront squarely the issue of high risk youth.

Levin, Henry M. EDUCATIONAL REFORM FOR DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS: AN EMERGING CRISIS. (NEA Search). Washington, DC: National Education Association, 1986.

Mann, Dale. "Dropout Prevention--Getting Serious About Programs that Work." NAASP BULLETIN, 66-73, April 1986.

Mann finds that schools are "doing a lot and learning a little" in dealing with dropouts; he calls for an effort to analyze carefully what is being done to whom, and with what effect.

McDill, Edward L.; Natriello, Gary and Pallas; Aaron, M. "Raising Standards and Retaining Students: The Impact of the Reform Recommendations on Potential Dropouts." Baltimore, MD: Center for Social Organization of Schools, The Johns Hopkins University, Report No. 358, April 1985. (Reprinted in slightly revised form in REVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH 55:4, 415-433, Winter 1985.)

This closely argued paper draws extensively on available research to examine possible positive and possible negative impacts of recent reform recommendations. They conclude that the challenge of educators is to find ways to provide the support that potential dropouts will need to successfully meet heightened standards.

McDill, Edward L.; Natriello, Gary and Pallas; Aaron, M. "Uncommon Sense: School Administrators, School Reform and Potential Dropouts." Prepared for presentation at the National Invitational Conference on Holding Power and Dropouts, Teachers College, Columbia University, February 1985. (ED 257 927)

This paper presents possible positive and negative impacts of school reform. It focuses specifically on possible roles for the school administrator in maximizing the effect on potential dropouts.

McDill, Edward L.; Natriello, Gary and Pallas; Aaron, M. "A Population at Risk: Potential Consequences of Tougher School Standards for Student Dropouts." AMERICAN JOURNAL OF EDUCATION 94:2, 135-181, February 1986.

The researchers spell out and justify a research agenda focusing on monitoring the impact of programs with New Standards, determine school characteristics associated

with successful education of at-risk students, provide students with services and flexible time options, and maintain high standards for all students.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. EFFECTIVE SCHOOLING PRACTICES: A RESEARCH SYNTHESIS. Portland, OR: NWREL, 1984.

A synthesis of effective schools research describing practices that contribute to high levels of student performance. Practices are arranged into classroom, school and district levels.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. THE NORTHWEST REPORT. Portland, OR: NWREL, July/August 1986.

This issue reviews a new publication, the "Effective Compensatory Education Sourcebook: (Griswold, Cotton and Hansen), which finds that program effectiveness in Chapter 1 schools--in terms of student achievement, attendance rates and parent support--is tied to the implementation of effective schooling practices.

O'Connor, Patrick. "Dropout Prevention Programs that Work." OSSC BULLETIN 29:4, December 1985.

This paper is aimed at the practitioner and attempts to synthesize findings from research and ongoing programs.

Pine, Patricia. RAISING STANDARDS IN THE SCHOOLS: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS. (AASA Critical Issues Report) Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators, 1985.

Rutter, Michael, et al. FIFTEEN THOUSAND HOURS. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979. Sexton, Porter W. "Trying to Make It Real Compared to What: Implications of High School Dropout Statistics." JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL EQUITY AND LEADERSHIP 5:2, 92- 106, Summer 1985.

In this article, the author presents his provocative findings that at-risk students who change schools are likely to reflect the dropout patterns of their new school instead of their old school. This thesis supports the notion that school expectations play a critical role in student success.

Squires, David A: Huitt, William G. and Segars, John K. EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS AND CLASSROOMS: A RESEARCH-BASED PERSPECTIVE, Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Chapter 4, "Effective Schools: What Research Says," examines factors determined by research to be characteristics of effective schools. Several studies are reviewed, and they are fairly unanimous in reporting the importance of student engagement, student success, teacher management of instruction and supervision by the principal as critical elements in effective schools.

TEACHERS COLLEGE RECORD. "School Dropouts: Patterns and Policies: (Special Issue) 87:3, Spring 1986.

This collection of articles examines dropout patterns among American youth and policies which have been developed to reduce the number of dropouts. While the authors represent a breadth of viewpoints, they seem to agree that 1) success in the area is possible, and 2) a substantial amount of further research in the area is necessary.

Ward, Beatrice A. INSTRUCTIONAL GROUPING IN THE CLASSROOM. Portland, OR: Goal Based Education Program, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, July 1986.

Describes how instructional grouping can be used (and how it should not be used) to promote learning in the classroom.

Wehlage, Gary G. "Effective Programs for the Marginal High School Student." PDK FASTBACK 197. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1983.

Wehlage cites six effective programs and elicits characteristics of an effective antidropout program. This paper is notable for both the power of the writer's argument and for the confidence he has that excellent programs for the dropout prone can be developed. The paper is full of suggestions for the practitioner.

Wehlage, Gary G. and Rutter, Robert A. EVALUATION OF MODEL PROGRAM FOR AT-RISK STUDENTS. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA, 1986.

This paper presents a model program for at-risk students and evaluative evidence in support of the claim that it has positive effects on them.

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**Hardwired to Connect:
The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities**

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**Hardwired to Connect:
The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities**

New Scientific Findings Shed Light on Why Large Numbers of
American Children Suffer from Emotional and Behavioral Problems

Symposium to discuss report's findings on Tuesday, September 9 (Dirksen SOB, Room G50, Washington, D.C., begins 9:00 a.m) – speakers include U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Richard Carmona, U.S. Assistant Secretary of HHS Dr. Wade Horn.

The Commission on Children at Risk, a panel of leading children's doctors, research scientists and youth service professionals, has issued a report to the nation about new strategies to reduce the currently high numbers of U.S. children who are suffering from emotional and behavioral problems such as depression, anxiety, attention deficit, conduct disorders, and thoughts of suicide. The Commission is basing its recommendations on recent scientific findings suggesting that children are biologically "hardwired" for enduring attachments to other people and for moral and spiritual meaning." Meeting children's needs for enduring attachments and for moral and

Duplicated with permission from Commission on Children at Risk. 2003. "Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities." (New York YMCA of the USA, Dartmouth Medical School, and Institute for American Values). For more information about this study or to obtain copies, please contact Institute for American Values, 1841 Broadway, Suite 211, New York, NY 10023. Tel (212)246-3942; Email: info@americanvalues.org.

spiritual meaning is the best way to ensure their healthy development, according to the Commission's report.

Said Dr. Kenneth L. Gladish, the National Executive Director, YMCA of the USA:

"The basic conclusion of this report is that children are hardwired for close connections to others and for moral and spiritual meaning. The report challenges all of us to strengthen those groups in our society that promote this type of connectedness. Here at the Y, we have been working for children and families since 1851 and we intend to be a part of that solution."

The Commission on Children at Risk is sponsored by YMCA of the USA, Dartmouth Medical School and the Institute for American Values. Commission members include **Steven Suomi** of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, **T. Berry Brazelton**, Harvard Medical School, **Allan Schore** of UCLA Medical School, **Alvin Poussaint** of Harvard Medical School, **Robert Coles** of Harvard Medical School; **James P. Comer** of Yale Medical School; the developmental psychobiologist **Linda Spear** of Binghamton University; the author and clinical psychologist **Judith Wallerstein** of the Center for the Family in Transition; and **Thomas Insel**, who was at Emory University at the time of the study, but has recently been appointed director of the National Institute of Mental Health.

Despite a decade of unprecedented economic growth that resulted in fewer children living in poverty, large and growing numbers of American children and adolescents are suffering from mental health problems. Scholars at the National Research Council in 2002 estimated that at least one of every four adolescents in the U.S. is currently at serious risk of not achieving productive adulthood. Twenty-one percent of U.S. children ages 9 to 17 have a diagnosable mental disorder or addiction; 8 percent of high school students suffer from clinical depression, and 20 percent of students report seriously having considered suicide in the past year. By the 1980s, U.S. children as a group were reporting more anxiety than did children who were psychiatric patients in the 1950s, according to one study.

The Commission is calling upon all U.S. citizens to help strengthen what it calls "authoritative communities" as likely to be the best strategy for improving children's lives, in its report, *Hardwired to Connect: The Case for Authoritative Communities*. Authoritative communities are groups of people who are committed to one another over time and who exhibit and are able to pass on what it means to be a good person. These groups provide the types of connectedness our children increasingly lack. Authoritative communities can be families with children and all civic, educational, recreational, community service, business, culture, and religious groups that serve or include persons under the age of 18 that exhibit certain characteristics. These characteristics are: 1) it is a social institution that includes children and youth; 2) it treats children as ends in themselves; 3) it is warm and nurturing; 4) it establishes clear boundaries and limits; 5) it is defined and guided at least partly by non-specialists; 6) it is multi-generational; 7) it has a long-term focus; 8) it encourages spiritual and religious development; 9) it reflects and transmits a shared understanding of what it means to be a good person; 10) it is philosophically oriented to the equal dignity of all persons and to the principle of love of neighbor.

The Commission's report represents the first time that neuroscientists have collaborated with social scientists who study civil society to improve outcomes for children. It also represents the first time that a diverse group of scientists and leading children's doctors are publicly recommending that our society pay considerably more attention to young people's moral and spiritual needs.

Said the child psychiatrist Dr. Kathleen Kovner Kline of the Dartmouth Medical School, the report's principal investigator:

"As children's doctors, we began this project because our waiting lists are too long. Our challenge today is to shift from treatment alone to treatment plus prevention. Broad social changes are required. We need to become environmental advocates for childhood."

The report and its recommendations will be discussed at a symposium, involving youth service professionals from around the country and others, starting at 9:00 a.m. on September 9 in the Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room G50 (corner 1st and C Streets, N.E., Washington, D.C.).

Scheduled speakers include the U.S. Surgeon General, Vice Admiral **Richard H. Carmona**; the Assistant Secretary for Families and Children at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Dr. **Wade Horn**; Dr. **Stephen Suomi** of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development; Dr. **Kenneth L. Gladish**, the National Executive Director of the YMCA of the USA; the report's Principal Investigator, Dr. **Kathleen Kovner Kline** of the Dartmouth Medical School; and other members of the Commission on Children at Risk.

What Recent Research Suggests

In searching for strategies to improve outcomes for children, the Commission reviewed research on the brain and human behavior from the last two to five years. Among the main scientific findings on which the Commission has based its recommendations are:

- The mechanisms by which we become and stay attached to others have a biological basis and are increasingly discernible in the basic structure of the brain.
- Nurturing environments, or the lack of them, influence the development of brain circuitry and the way genes affect behavior.
- The old "nature versus nurture" debate – focusing on whether heredity or environment is the main determinant of human conduct – is no longer relevant to serious discussions of child well-being and youth programming. New scientific findings are teaching us to marvel at how nature and nurture interact. These findings suggest that strong nurturing can reduce or eliminate the harmful effects of genes that are associated with aggression, anxiety, depression or substance abuse.
- Primary nurturing relationships influence early spiritual development, and spiritual development can influence us biologically in the same ways that primary nurturing relationships do. For instance, spirituality and religiosity can be associated with

lower levels of stress hormone (cortisol), more optimism, and commitment to helping others.

- Religiosity and spirituality significantly influence well-being.
- The human brain appears to be organized to ask ultimate questions and seek ultimate answers.

These findings are described in detail in the attached copy of the Commission's report.

Hardwired to Connect

The Commission was particularly impressed by mounting scientific evidence suggesting that in two basic ways the human child is hardwired to connect. First, children are hardwired for close attachments to other people, beginning with their mothers, fathers, and other relatives, and then extending out to the broader community.

Recent animal studies show that our ability and need to become and stay attached to others is biologically "programmed" and increasingly discernible in the basic structure of the brain. For instance, recent animal studies have shown the role the neuropeptides, oxytocin and vasopressin in male-female bonding. In the area of parental care, in several animal species it has been shown that attachment hormones help to trigger parental care, which in turn helps to trigger the release of more attachment hormones. For example, as male marmosets begin to care for their offspring, their levels of prolactin increase, which likely reinforces the bonding process. Other studies implicate numerous other neurotransmitters and hormones in the human bonding process.

Recent animal studies are also underscoring the powerful effects of strong nurturing on genetic transcription and brain circuitry, improving outcomes for offspring and helping in ways that are measurable at the cellular level. Animal studies show that high levels of maternal stimulation can change brain functioning and reduce genetic risks for anxiety, aggression, depression and substance abuse in infant animals. It can even turn genetic risks into an advantage.

Steve Suomi of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and member of the Commission has done extensive research with rhesus monkeys showing how nurturing and genes interact. He has found that strong mothering not only eliminates the negative impact of risky genes, it even appears that it can turn certain of those genes into an advantage.

For instance, in some rhesus monkeys, a variation in one of their genes seems to predispose them towards aggression and poor impulse control. These aggressive monkeys also drink a lot of alcohol at monkey happy hour, and they are more likely than other monkeys to engage in "binge drinking." Typically, these aggressive young monkeys are not well-liked or accepted by the other monkeys. But when these genetically "at risk" monkeys are raised in supportive environments, the harmfully aggressive behavior disappears, as does the excessive and binge drinking. But there is more. These potentially "at risk" monkeys not only survive. They flourish. They do very well. They appear to be especially successful in making their way to or near the

top of the rhesus monkey social hierarchy. What has happened? An improved social environment has changed an inherited vulnerability into a positive behavioral asset.

Hardwired for Meaning

A smaller but still significant body of research also shows that people are "hardwired" for meaning, born with a built-in capacity and drive to ask the ultimate questions about life's purpose: Why am I here? What is the purpose of my life? How should I live? What will happen when I die? Across time and cultures, this distinctively human pursuit has been closely connected to spiritual seeking and experience and to religious belief and practice. Using brain imaging, neuroscientists Eugene d'Aquili and Andrew B. Newberg's have found that the same part of the brain that underlies the human need to seek answers to what is true about life's deepest questions also underlies many spiritual and religious experiences. In other words, the pursuit of meaning appears to be physiologically linked to spiritual and religious seeking.

To date the influence of religion on U.S. young people has been "grossly understudied," according to Byron Johnson of the University of Pennsylvania. However, existing research is highly suggestive. For adolescents, religiosity is significantly associated with a reduced likelihood of both unintentional and intentional injury (both of which are leading causes of death for teenagers. Homicides, suicides and accidents account for 85 percent of all deaths among early to late adolescents). Religious teenagers are safer drivers and are more likely to wear seatbelts than their less religious peers. They are less likely to become juvenile delinquents or adult criminals. They are less prone to substance abuse. They are less likely to endorse engaging in high-risk behavior or the idea of enjoying danger.

On the positive side of the coin, religiously committed teenagers are more likely to volunteer in the community, to participate in sports and student government, to have high self-esteem and more positive attitudes about life. Much of this research is based on large national studies.

One religious quality that appears to be especially beneficial, in terms of mental health and lifestyle consequences, is what some scholars call personal devotion, or the young person's sense of participating in a "direct personal relationship with the Divine." Personal devotion among adolescents is associated with reduced risk-taking, more effectively resolving feelings of loneliness, greater regard for self and for others, and a stronger sense that life has meaning and purpose. These protective effects of personal devotion are twice as great for adolescents as they are for adults. This last finding clearly reinforces the idea, found in many cross-national studies, that adolescence is a time of particularly intense searching for, and openness to, the transcendent. Here is how Lisa Miller of Columbia University puts it: "A search for spiritual relationship with the Creator may be an inherent developmental process in adolescence."

For this reason, the Commission is recommending that our society as a whole, and youth advocates and youth service professionals in particular, should pay greater attention to this aspect of youth development. This task will not be easy, the Commission's warns in its report. Because we are a philosophically diverse and religiously plural society, many

of our youth-serving programs and social environments for young people will need to find ways respectfully to reflect that diversity and pluralism. But that is a challenge to be embraced, not avoided. One of the many problems with the avoidance strategy is that denying or ignoring the spiritual needs of adolescents may end up creating a void in their lives that either devolves into depression or is filled by other forms of questing and challenge, such as drinking, unbridled consumerism, petty crime, sexual precocity, or flirtations with violence.

The Link Between Social Connectedness and Child Well-being

In recent years, authoritative communities have gotten significantly weaker in the United States. Consider the family, for children, the first and typically most important authoritative community. From the mid 1960s to the mid 1990s, U.S. families overall have gotten steadily weaker. Today, more than half of all children in the U.S. will spend a significant part of their childhood in a single-parent home, usually a father-absent home, due to high rates of divorce and unmarried childbearing. One particularly harmful aspect of this trend is the widespread absence of fathers in children's lives.

Today there is also a rough scholarly consensus that other authoritative communities, such as civic and community groups, houses of worship, political clubs, and workplace associations have deteriorated significantly in recent decades.

The idea that the decline in social connectedness is contributing significantly to a range of childhood problems is supported by numerous studies. For instance, a recent analysis of 269 studies, dating back to the 1950s, links steady increases in self-reported anxiety and depression among U.S. young people primarily to the decline of "social connectedness." A major population-based study from Sweden – that is, a study focusing on all Swedish children – concludes that children living in one-parent homes have more than double the risk of psychiatric disease, suicide or attempted suicide, and alcohol-related disease, and more than three times the risk of drug-related disease, compared to Swedish children living in two-parent homes. These findings emerge after the scholars controlled for a wide range of demographic and socioeconomic variables.

The Swedish study is important not only because of its large scale and rigorous controls, but also because Sweden has long been a world leader in developing social policies that ameliorate the economic and material consequences of growing up in one-parent homes. As a result, the higher rates of mental and emotional problems experienced by Swedish children in one-parent homes would appear less likely to stem solely or even primarily from economic circumstances. Obviously the lack of money can be a critical problem. But another obviously important – and partially independent – problem is the fracturing of the child's primary authoritative community.

In 1999, the prominent sociologist Robert Putnam and his colleagues carried out a small but fascinating experiment reported in Putnam's book, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, to test the hypothesis that higher levels of social connectedness mean better outcomes for children and youth. Putnam and his colleagues developed a list of fourteen leading indicators of social connectedness, which they called the Social Capital Index, and applied it on a state-by-state basis. He then

compared the Annie E. Casey Foundation's state rankings on child well-being with his own state rankings for social connectedness. He found that: "Statistically, the correlation between high social capital and positive child development is as close to perfect as social scientists ever find in data analyses of this sort." This robust correlation held true even after Putnam controlled for a range of socioeconomic and demographic characteristics.

Commission on Children At Risk

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Elizabeth Berger, The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
David Blankenhorn, Institute for American Values
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James P. Comer, Yale University
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Robert Karen, Adelphi University
Kathleen Kovner Kline, Dartmouth Medical School (Principal Investigator)
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What Others Are Saying About

Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities

"This report brings together neuroscience, developmental psychology, the psychology and sociology of religion, theories of civil society, and moral and political philosophy in ways that will forever change our thinking about the needs of the young and how society must address them."

Don S. Browning, University of Chicago

"Hardwired to Connect reminds us that we ignore our basic human needs for connection at our peril. What observant parents have long known, moral teachers have taught, and child development experts have observed, is now confirmed scientifically. Family and children's policies that ignore the findings summarized in this powerful report will be policies that fail or, even worse, do harm."

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Charity Navarrete

Institute for American Values

Phone: 212.246.3942

Email: charity@americanvalues.org

Institute for American Values
1841 Broadway, Suite 211
New York, NY 10023
Tel: (212) 246-3942
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